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THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GENERAL SIR JAMES BROWNE

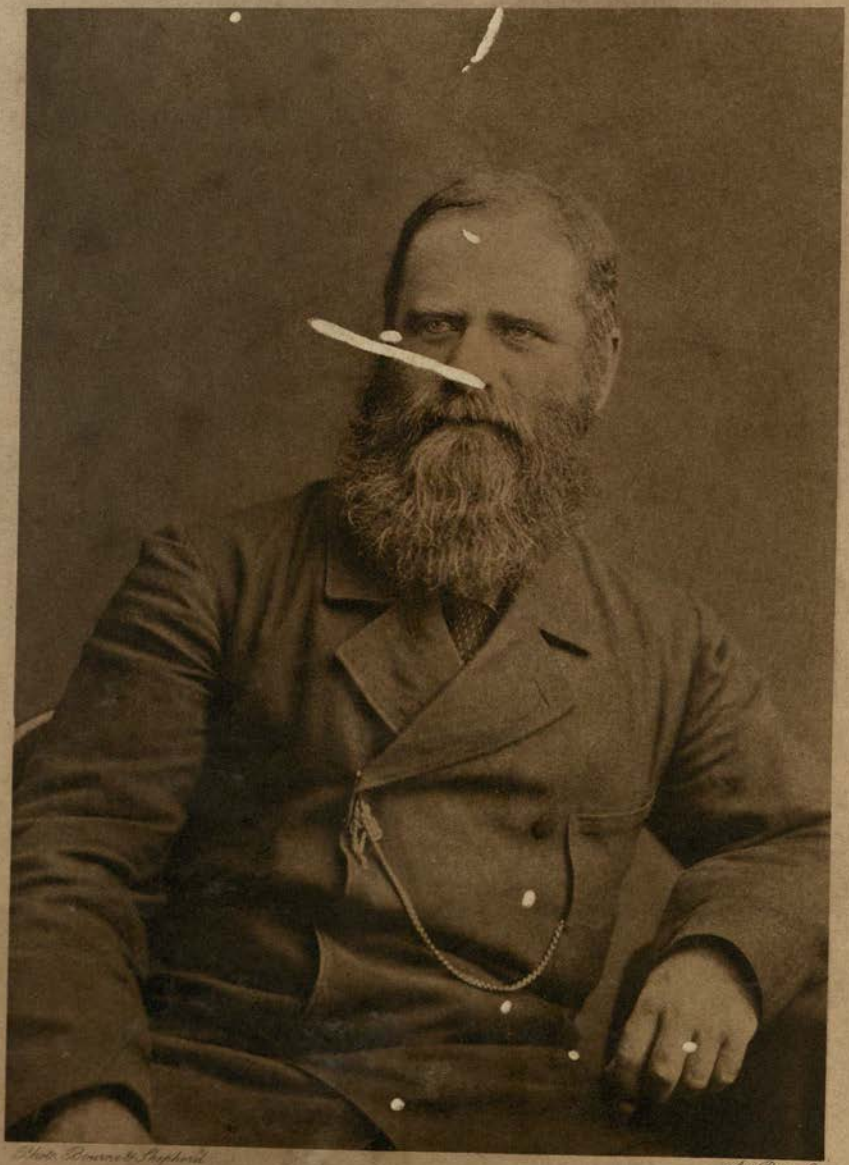


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Sir James Browne

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GENERAL SIR JAMES BROWNE, R.E. K.C.B., K.C.S.I. (BUSTER BROWNE)

BY GENERAL J. J. McLEOD INNES
R.E., V.C.

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PREFACE

THIS memoir of General Sir James Browne has been drawn up in compliance with the wishes of the late Lady Browne, and is based on information kindly given by his family and friends and brother officers.

My hearty thanks are due to General Pollard, General Sir Alexander Taylor, and Colonel Henry Blair—all of them Royal Engineers—with whom Sir James was associated throughout the whole of his career; also to the late General Sir Michael Biddulph, Sir G. Molesworth, General Sir R. Sankey; Colonels Burn-Murdoch and Boughey, with whom he served from time to time in Engineer or Military operations; and most especially to General Sir Buchanan Scott, his invaluable second in the stupendous task of the Hurnai Railway.

Field-Marshal Earl Roberts, under whose command in India he served as Quartermaster-General of the army, said of him, with emphasis, "He was grand!"

For advice in regard to Browne's Frontier Policy, I am very greatly indebted to Sir D. Fitzpatrick, lately Governor of the Punjab.

J. J. M. I.

December, 1904.

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LIFE OF SIR JAMES BROWNE

CHAPTER I

ANTECEDENTS AND EARLY YEARS

JAMES BROWNE INTRODUCED—HIS FATHER, DR. ROBERT BROWNE—HIS CHILDHOOD AND BOYHOOD IN FRANCE AND GERMANY—PREPARATIONS FOR INDIA.

THE scene opens in Calcutta. The year 1859 had entered its closing quarter. All India had settled down into profound peace after the great convulsion. The Mutiny had been crushed. No longer did a vestige of rebellion linger anywhere in the land; and the closing act of retribution had been quite recently carried out, when Tantia Topee, the ablest of the leaders of the enemy, had expiated his crimes on the gallows at Cawnpore—the very site of the supreme atrocity, to which he had been more than consenting. The exciting times of 1857 were beginning to be regarded as almost ancient history. Her Most Gracious Majesty had assumed the sovereignty and rule of the land; Lord Canning was now her Viceroy as well as Governor-General of India; and

the event had, as it were, been blazoned in the heavens by the portent of a brilliant comet.

Nowhere was there even the gentlest of breezes on the face of the waters, except perhaps, it might be thought, at the city and port of Calcutta, where the season cynically called the "*Cold Weather*" was assumed to have set in.

This little breeze or rippling of the waters was due to the outbreak of war with China, and to the local preparations for an expeditionary force that was to start from Calcutta to take part in the campaign there. These preparations were being vigorously pressed forward—the more vigorously that the destined leader of that force, Sir Robert (afterwards Lord) Napier, was present on the spot to see to them. This appointment of Sir Robert, and all that it implied, will be dealt with more fully further on.[1] Here it suffices to mention that, as an epoch in the annals of the Royal Engineers, the corps to which he belonged, this command in China caused much pleasure, and no little excitement, among them.

At the same time, while the Engineers in Calcutta were elated with the improved prospects thus opening out to the corps, the periodical season for a little regimental curiosity and interest had arrived in the accession to their numbers of young officers from England—a curiosity which on this occasion was somewhat greater than usual, owing to the rumours that were afloat regarding one of them. He was written and spoken of as exceptional and unique; of an independent turn of mind and quite unconventional; of powerful physique, but with no swagger; able and many-sided, but without any assumption; not by any means in the Admirable

[1] See page 103.

Crichton style, but a good sort all round—genial, humorous, and a capital comrade; lastly, a true Scot, and given to "ganging his ain gait." He was said to have been brought up on the Continent, and to know and do all manner of things that no one else ever thought of doing or knowing. Thus ran the rumour, but rumours are apt to be tinged with exaggeration.

The youngster's name was James Browne, but he was said to be more generally and more distinctively known as "Buster"—a name without a meaning, but with an expressive, buoyant, vigorous sort of sound, and one that he had inherited from an elder brother,[1] who had met his fate in Havelock's advance to the rescue of the Lucknow Residency garrison.

Young Browne duly reached Calcutta, and, for once, rumour had not been lying. He was found to answer the expectations that had been formed; but, not being allowed to join the force for China as he had hoped, he made but a brief stay in the metropolis, and embarked forthwith on his career in Upper India, where every Bengal Engineer available was urgently needed.

The earlier pages of James Browne's career will show how thoroughly his education and the formation of his character and proclivities were due to the home education and personal guidance of his father, Dr. Robert Browne; and, at the same time, it cannot be questioned that the father was in all material points—moral, mental, and physical—the prototype of the son. Before, then, entering on "Buster's" own career, a few words will now be said respecting Dr. Robert Browne's antecedents.

Our scene therefore goes back half a century, and shifts from Calcutta to Scotland—to the historical

[1] An account of him will be found at page 22.

district and town of Falkirk, of old the storm-swept outpost of Stirling Castle, the ancient citadel of the kingdom, peopled by a hard and sturdy race.

Robert Browne stands before us, a lad born and brought up in the manse of his father, the parish minister, widely known as a divine and a scholar. Imbued with the spirit and the lessons acquired from the old church at his door, then about to be restored, and from its relics, the tombs and monuments of the Scottish heroes of olden days, what wonder if Robert Browne was led, while still a boy, to adopt a career for himself, to quit his father's home and to go for further study and special training to one of the Scottish universities—Edinburgh, Aberdeen, or St. Andrews!

The times were exceptional and exciting. The war with France was in full swing; our empire in the East was advancing at a momentous pace; while Australia, Canada, and Greater Britain generally, were taking shape. Hence, felt Robert Browne, his career must be in foreign lands. So he now, while still a boy, joined the Universities first of St. Andrews and then of Edinburgh, and, helping his finances by tutoring and bursarships, as was the habit of the times, studied finally in the science and other classes, and won his position in the medical profession.

By this time, however, there was a certain amount of retrogression in young men's prospects, for Waterloo had been fought, and with "gentle peace returning" there was a glut in the market of aspirants for employment; and this resulted in Browne's starting in life as the doctor of a vessel on the India and Australia Line. While thus engaged he had an opportunity of showing his worth when a grave epidemic, from which he was himself a severe sufferer,

broke out in his ship. His skill and conduct attracted attention, especially from some of the older and more experienced passengers, by one of whom, Captain Whiteman, he was induced and helped to start in practice in Calcutta. Captain Whiteman further remained a warm friend through life, and eventually becoming a director of the East India Company, gave appointments in its service to all Dr. Browne's sons.

Dr. Browne then started on his career in Calcutta, and was successful in his practice, both with the English residents and with the native community. Among his habitual patients was a Mr. Van Plasker, a Dutch merchant who had lost his English wife, and whose only daughter was receiving her education in England. When, in due course, she returned to India to join her father, he was ill, and asked Dr. Browne to meet her on arrival and escort her to her home. This meeting resulted eventually in their marriage; and four years later, there being then no further necessity for remaining in India, and as their children would probably thrive better in an English climate, they left Calcutta in 1835.

After revisiting old friends and old scenes in England and Scotland they moved over to France, and at first lived at single anchor, so to speak, at Tours and Paris and at Le Havre, where James, their youngest child—the subject of this memoir—was born, on September 16th, 1839.

One point only need be mentioned in regard to their stay at Le Havre. It is that another of the English families resident there was that of Mr. Charles Pierson, with whom the Brownes formed a strong and lasting friendship. Their eldest son, William Henry Pierson, of nearly the same age as

James Browne, became afterwards his class-fellow at Cheltenham, and eventually his brother officer in the Royal Engineers. Further, in still later years, as will be seen, James Browne married the Piersons' only daughter.

James Browne, then, was born in France towards the end of 1839, and spent his childhood there till 1847, when the whole family migrated to Germany, first to Frankfort and afterwards to Bonn. The eldest son, John, had been born in India, and was some five or six years older than James. The second son, Robert, was born at Tours, and was only about a year his senior; and these two, Robert and James, the youngest of the whole family, were devoted to each other. From Germany the family returned for a couple of years to France, to Boulogne, and then, at the end of 1854, crossed over finally to England.

Throughout these first fifteen years of James's life, Dr. Browne, as already casually mentioned, supervised fully and personally the education of all the three sons, adopting lines which were continuous throughout—whether in France or in Germany—and wholly different, intentionally, from those customary in the schools of England or Scotland. All religious instruction was given at home, very carefully and fully, as also a scholarly training in French and German, and in classics and history, especially Indian history, all of which the boys were taught direct and wholly by Dr. Browne. They went to the local classes, or gymnasia, for most other subjects of education and for such sciences as astronomy and geology, in which they became specially interested through the friendship of men on the spot, eminent in these subjects. There were no boys' games, as in England. There had been none in Scotland during

Dr. Browne's youth. But athletics, swimming, fencing, and the like, were taught in local special schools.

All this implied a boyhood—a life—an education—very different from that of boys in England or Scotland; but the home life and the constant association with the families of their French and German friends formed a distinctive and effective feature of the education involved.

In holiday seasons they habitually revelled in walking tours with Dr. Browne, in such regions as Switzerland and the Black Forest, so that as the sons grew out of boyhood they had the experience and self-reliance of young men.

It may be added that from the earliest years James Browne developed an exceptional love and turn for music. It was a great joy and solace to him through life, though he was never actually taught music or singing properly or scientifically or as a lesson. There seems to have been, at one time, an idea or fear that his strong love of it might be prejudicial to his practical career.

Such were the education and life that helped to form James Browne's personality and character by the time he was emerging out of boyhood, and on the eve of joining a public school in England, preparatory to special training for India. Though a thorough boy in heart, he was a man in mind and bent, even to being led and accustomed by his recent experiences to watch public affairs, to think of them, and to arrive at independent conclusions, not always those that might be popular or in fashion.

During all his years on the Continent stirring events had been going on in India, and the thoughts and attention of the family had been much turned towards them—such as the war and disaster in

Afghanistan, the conquest of Scinde, the war with Gwalior, and the first conflicts with the Sikhs; and latterly there had been the Punjab and Burma wars, followed by the annexations of those countries.

It may be observed, while dealing with this subject, that Dr. Browne, having before him the probability of a career in India for his sons, seems to have been careful to impress on them the evil in India of any bearing to the natives other than kindly, sympathetic, and friendly, and the importance of avoiding harshness and arrogance. During the time of his own residence in India no ground had arisen for bitterness or race antagonism. British arms and influence and methods were dominating the land and introducing order and social improvement. But, with all this, the mutual relations of the English and the natives—especially in Calcutta—had been excellent and kindly, and Dr. Browne had very successfully impressed on his sons such characteristics of the natives as formed the habitual features of the race in general.

In these later years a period of embroglios had begun in Europe itself—Italy and Bavaria, Austria and Hungary; and also France, especially Paris, had been the scene of war, revolts, or revolution; and Louis Napoleon had become emperor before the family came to reside temporarily in Boulogne; so that the time of "Buster's" youth had not been specially pacific. Then, at the end of 1854, the Crimean war had begun; and the family moved over to England to prepare James Browne for service in India, his elder brothers having already preceded him, for the same purpose.

It will be remembered[1] that Dr. Browne had, in

[1] *Vide* page 5

his young days, gained the friendship of his fellow-passenger, Captain Whiteman. This gentleman had now, in his older years, become a director of the East India Company, and remembering his early friend, he gave him appointments in the service of that company for all his three sons—one for the Civil Service to the eldest, John, and two Addiscombe cadetships for the younger ones, Robert and James; and it was in connection with these openings that Dr. Browne, as already shown, had sent John and Robert to England to prepare, the one at Oxford for Haileybury, and the other at school for Addiscombe. And now that these two elder sons were on the point of joining Haileybury and Addiscombe respectively, Dr. Browne, with his whole family, crossed the Channel to England, and proceeded to Cheltenham, where they settled temporarily, placing James as a pupil in the College early in 1855, and where too they renewed their friendship with the Pierson family, already resident there.

It was at Cheltenham[1] College, then, that James Browne entered, early in 1855, for his special education and preparation for the military service of India. Of course, at first, at this English school he created something of a sensation, for while he spoke English perfectly, without any accent, though with a sort of burr, still it was obvious that he had been brought up abroad and was new to the ways and habits and games of English schoolboys. Hence at the start there was a natural and inevitable tendency to make fun of him. But this soon ceased, as he was exceptionally strong, hardy, and resolute, with the frame of an athlete, trained in the gymnasium both in Germany and France. Then his natural good-nature

[1] A memorial tablet to Sir James Browne has recently been put up.

and his quaint humour won the day, and he forthwith became thoroughly popular and a leader in the school. He also, at once, took a good position in its classrooms, being placed in the highest form on the modern side, and standing at its head—neck and neck, both generally and especially in mathematics, with his Le Havre friend, Pierson.

What surprised James Browne, as it had before surprised his elder brothers, was the singular ignorance of the other boys in such general subjects as history and geography, as well as in foreign languages, and the neglect of them in the school course; while at the same time there was no part of its recognised curriculum in which he found himself seriously behindhand. All honour, then, to the old Scot—*tenax propositi*—who had lined out and carried through his own scheme of education for his sons, and was bringing it to so successful an issue!

Browne remained at Cheltenham for that one year, 1855, by the end of which the Crimean war was practically at an end, and the time had arrived to begin giving effect to the lessons which its blunders had taught the country—and also to develop, on a scale suitable to the greatness of England, other institutions and principles, of which the germs had been sown in the sensational fields of Crimean suffering and ardour, and with which the names of Florence Nightingale and of Hedley Vicars will ever be associated. Of the one, the fame is worldwide; to the other may be justly attributed the rise and growth of that higher moral tone and conduct in the men who fill our ranks, which have gradually become so marked, especially of late.

At the end of 1855, as Browne was to join Addiscombe in the following February, the family left

Cheltenham altogether, and took up their residence finally and permanently in London.[1]

His brother Robert had been already a year at Addiscombe, but had to remain on for another year to complete the residence required before he could get his commission; and so he returned there, taking James with him and introducing him in February, 1856. He had begun to make his mark—was prominent among the cadets for his strength and prowess at football, and had been given the title of "Buster." As James soon showed similar qualities, he gradually became known as "young Buster," the "young" being dropped in course of time. This Addiscombe football was not at all an organised methodical game, such as that played at Rugby or elsewhere, even as described in "Tom Brown," but a very rough-and-tumble business, with much horse play and little skill. The late Sir Charles Bernard afterwards began to introduce the more correct game; but he left Addiscombe early for Haileybury, and Addiscombe was itself abolished very shortly afterwards.

Robert Browne left Addiscombe at the end of the year 1856, receiving a commission in the Bengal Native Infantry. He did not possess the particular gifts or mathematical bent that were essential to the securing of a high position in the Addiscombe lists, but he stood high in general subjects—and exceptionally well in the regard of his comrades, by whom he was thought likely to come strongly to the front in practical life.

[1] At 103, Gloucester Place, Portman Square.

CHAPTER II

THE INDIA OF DALHOUSIE AND CANNING

INDIA UNDER LORD DALHOUSIE—THE FIRST YEAR OF LORD CANNING'S RULE—THE COURSE OF THE MUTINY—ROBERT BROWNE'S ADVENTURES, SERVICES, AND DEATH DURING THE MUTINY—CHANGES IN THE STATE OF INDIA AFTER THE MUTINY.

NOW that Browne is about to start on his career in India it may be useful to describe the state of that country, the events that had been occurring, and the antecedent circumstances, with a view to a proper understanding of the unfortunate position of affairs which had resulted from them.

This subject can be most conveniently dealt with in consecutive periods, of which the first is Lord Dalhousie's rule; next, the first year of Lord Canning's rule—*i.e.* up to the first signs of the Mutiny; and third, the course of the Mutiny from its outbreak to its complete suppression and the restoration of peace.

These will now be described; but reorganisation, the changes and rearrangements, administrative, military, and others, that were introduced in 1859 after the Mutiny as the start of a new *régime*, will be dealt with separately.

To proceed, then, first with the epoch of India under Lord Dalhousie: this period ended in 1856, and his last act had been the annexation of Oude,

by which the territory included under "British India" had been brought within one huge unbroken ring fence. But with this enormous increase of territory there had been no really corresponding addition made to the arrangements for its military strength and security. Lord Dalhousie had asked for it from England, but had not received it to any adequate extent, owing, it is understood, to the exigencies and strain caused by the Crimean war; so that, as an example of the weakness of the military situation, the great stretch of country between Delhi and Calcutta—some 900 miles—was, as regards *British* troops, garrisoned by only three regiments.

The main strength of the English army was concentrated in the newly conquered Punjab, and on the Afghan frontier. The Punjab itself had been made thoroughly friendly at first by judicious and kindly treatment and light taxation. But latterly its chief ruler, the wise and beneficent Sir Henry Lawrence, had been moved away; the financial screw had been applied; the Sikh chieftains had been beggared, and the Sikh peasantry had felt the ignominy keenly.

Over all India and especially in Upper India there had been an exceptional and beneficent increase in the measures for the material improvement of the country (as shown in Lord Dalhousie's Minute[1]), coupled, however, with a less intimate intercourse with the people and a greater formality and rigidity in the administration of justice, with the resulting increase in chicanery and corruption.[2] And unfortu-

[1] See page 15.

[2] In the more southern regulation provinces this was so notorious as to be a chronic subject "*pour rire*." There is an authentic case of a suit in which one party produced deeds—pure forgeries—to

nately the most prominent and immediate result of these improvements was that malcontents and intriguers had used them widespread to excite the fears and suspicions of the people as to the supernatural aims and evil designs of their English rulers.

Meanwhile the seeds of ill-feeling that had arisen in the Sepoy army at the end of the Afghan war, owing largely to the loss of caste unavoidably entailed on the Hindoos by the exigencies of residence in a purely Mahomedan country, had been spreading rapidly, fostered and increased by the idea that the Government was indifferent to the matter.

The great group of native states, from Rajpootana to the Deccan, was fairly loyal, owing to the wisdom of the British officers who were the residents of their respective courts; but there was a strong element of disaffection and uneasiness caused by Lord Dalhousie's widespread annexations and his opposition to the time-honoured practice of adopting heirs where none existed in the natural course of succession; his inclination being to have recourse, instead, to the summary measure (as in the cases of Nagpore and Jhansi) of declaring the dynasty at an end and incorporating the state into British territory.

Worst of all, there was prevalent among the whole native population, of all creeds and classes, a strong but generally vague religious agitation, based upon the prospect of some epoch, such as the centenary of Plassey, the prophesied advent of another Mahomedan prophet, the Emam Mehndee, and the like, as well as upon rumours of another class—traced to the notorious Moonshee Azimoolla—of the exhaus-

authenticate his claim, and lo! the other party (having got scent of it) produced at once in response complete receipts—equally pure forgeries—for the sum involved!

tion and depletion of the British army owing to its losses in the Crimea.

Further, in addition to the indiscreet efforts of would-be missionaries, some perfectly justifiable and righteous efforts to suppress real and rooted malpractices had increased the irritation of fanaticism and bigotry. Thuggee had been hunted out; but Suttee was still carried on, female infanticide was sadly prevalent, and there is no doubt that the efforts to suppress them entirely had met with much dogged opposition.

So that there was a very large and weighty mass of causes for disaffection and consequent anxiety; and to it all Lord Dalhousie, when he was leaving, added his heaviest and most telling legacy—the annexation of Oude, the last and most important of the independent states, and the dethronement of its King: the King, be it remembered, of the Fatherland—the greatest nursery—of the Rajpoot Sepoys of the native army.

This last was the final blow to the trust and fidelity of the Sepoy army of a century's growth; and with the enactment of the next year, which will presently be described, that army was bound to subside.

At the end of his reign Lord Dalhousie had tersely drawn up a list and statement, under 180 heads, of his widespread series of administrative reforms and arrangements, and measures for the material improvement of the country. His achievements for England do not require to be described. He had conquered and annexed the kingdoms of the Punjab and Lower Burma. He had taken the administration of the great province of Oude out of the hands of its Nawab, and placed it under our own officers. So that now all India—all Hindostan—was

in a ring fence under British sway, and Runjeet Singh's prediction to Lord Metcalfe, "Sub lal ho jaega,"[1] had been fulfilled. The whole map of India was now tinted red. Only one administrative reform did there appear to be which he had not carried through—the introduction of a budget and of scientific accounts and finance. That would have completed the task. So no wonder that pæans and congratulations and triumphant feelings pervaded England.

Lord Dalhousie's departure for England and Lord Canning's assumption of the government of India having followed closely on the annexation of Oude, the first matter to be now dealt with is the immediate fate of that province and of its King and court.

The administration of the province was left under the charge of Sir James Outram, a thoroughly capable ruler; but he soon fell ill, and had to quit for England, leaving for his successor a most well-ordered and beneficent scheme for the settlement and government of the province. Its fate will be referred to presently, but in the meanwhile the action of the King and his court have to be dealt with.

The King refused to remain at Lucknow, and came south with his whole court to Calcutta, sending some of his representatives to England to plead his cause. At the same time, two of the Sepoy regiments that had garrisoned Lucknow at and immediately before the annexation were—somewhat thoughtlessly it may be said—moved in the same direction—*i.e.* to the neighbourhood (1) of Calcutta, where the King of Oude now resided, and (2) of Moorshedabad, where was the palace of the former Nawabs of Bengal of Clive's days.

[1] "It will all be red."

Thus early in 1857 there were concentrated about Calcutta the leading malcontents, the chief of the displaced monarchs, the most practised and skilful body of intriguers, and the most disaffected troops in India, the whole of them in the immediate neighbourhood of our greatest arsenals and military factories. What, then, could be more natural, probable, and easy than that these Oude intriguers should tamper with the troops and arsenal workmen, and bring about the suspicion—with the swiftly following cry—of "improperly greased cartridges," by which to contaminate and destroy the caste of the Sepoys who would have to use them? This cry was followed at once by the mutiny of the two regiments already named, the 19th and 34th (which were forthwith disbanded), and by the "Greased Cartridge" cry flaring up and spreading, like wildfire, through the whole of the old Bengal Sepoy army.

Meanwhile a war had begun with Persia, and was exciting and irritating the Mahomedans of India. Moreover, at the very same time, there was a large assemblage in Calcutta, for court ceremonials and interviews with Lord Canning, of some of the most powerful representatives of the old Indian royalties —such as Scindia, and others—affording the easiest and most effective of means for widespread conspiracy.

In Oude, which had been left in a quiet and promising state by Sir James Outram, though its old rulers had since become the origin of the whole agitation, the interests of the Talookdars (the chiefs of the clans) and great landholders had been neglected, and they had become anxious, irritated, and at length angry; but Sir Henry Lawrence now arrived, as their new ruler, early in 1857, in the very nick of time. He at once acted promptly and wisely, and

not only righted their wrongs, but made them friendly and cordial. Other malign influences, however, had been at work.

The Wahabi Mahomedan sect at Patna had incited religious quarrels between the Hindoos and the Mussulmans through a couple of emissaries, Moulvies, at the rival shrines of the two creeds at Fyzabad in Oude; and there had been some fighting, which too Sir Henry had at once suppressed. But these Moulvies were powerful and active leaders of fanaticism, and affected the whole country between Delhi and the east of Oude.

General Anson, the Commander-in-chief, had never seen service; was best known as a society man and a great whist player, and seemed either unequal or averse to the vigour called for by the crisis, or blind to its gravity. The troops in the provinces nearest Delhi were slow to concentrate, and though the mutiny at Meerut occurred on May 10th, the battle of Badli Ke Serai, with which the siege of Delhi began, was not fought till June 12th following—a lapse of more than a month, by which time the chief had died. Now the centenary of Plassey was June 23rd; so it was now beginning to be rather late for any overwhelming catastrophe to the empire to be brought about on or by that date; and the most the enemy could make of it as an epoch or anniversary was to generalise the date into a period.

Meanwhile, apparently, the first news of this state of affairs to attract attention at all in England was the intelligence of the actual Meerut outbreak of May 10th. No notice seems to have been taken of all the seething concomitants or previous causes of disaffection.

But before this Lord Canning had in 1856, the

previous year, added the most effective fuel to the fire by the publication of the General Service Act, under which Sepoys could henceforward enlist only for general service, and would have to cross the seas, go wherever they might be desired, and so become liable to indiscriminate breach of caste. This act was the most mischievous deed of all as regards the soldiery. The cry now in the homes of the Oude and other Hindoo Sepoys was, "What will our sons now have to do? That which has been our business in life for the last hundred years is gone! The Sepoy army, which has built up this empire for the great 'Company' that employed it, is at an end! An end of shame! It behoves us to act for ourselves."

Then at length early in May, 1857, a crisis about the cartridges arose at Meerut, and was bungled—the troops there mutinied and rushed to Delhi, forty miles off, where the city people joined them and proclaimed the restoration of the Moghul empire; and thus began the war of the Mutiny, with the imperial city and fortress of Delhi as the gage of battle.

The outbreak at Meerut and Delhi was so premature as to upset the plans of those who were the conspirators of the revolt, and to give the Government time for some preparation. The only places where full advantage for that purpose was taken of the interval, were the Punjab and Lucknow. The only man in India who had really and fully foreseen the storm, and prepared strenuously for it before it developed, was Sir Henry Lawrence, who was at this juncture the head of the Government of Oude; and the people of the province now aided him heartily, with supplies and other needs. The one old warrior who scornfully refused to believe that the outbreak was serious was Sir Hugh Wheeler at Cawnpore,

and he would not deign to make preparations to meet it, however strenuously urged by Sir Henry Lawrence to do so. The one province which met the crisis when it broke out with adequate, and more than adequate, vigour was the Punjab. There, too, fortunately, the foresight of Sir Herbert Edwardes had secured the integrity and safety of the frontier—(1) by a treaty with Dost Mahomed, and (2) by the presence with him of the Lumsden brothers; and his personal influence there was at once leading the local and frontier tribes to side with the English and join them in large numbers, first for the Punjab itself, and then for the struggle at Delhi.

The Sikhs were, for prudential reasons, not sent to the seat of war, but kept in the Punjab, and for a time some of the frontier regiments were the only troops sent to swell the army besieging Delhi. Then gradually additional troops of frontier men were raised and sent down with John Nicholson, and shortly afterwards Delhi was stormed, on September 14th.

Cawnpore, not having been prepared, fell. Its fate need not be told here.

Lucknow was the prolonged centre of conflict throughout the whole war, and in seven separate stages, thus:

(1) For six weeks the improvised fort of Muchi Bhawan kept the city under control, until
(2) the Residency position was prepared, and then, after the Chinhut fight, defended till September 25th, when
(3) Havelock and Outram's reinforcements arrived to its rescue—only to be themselves beleaguered by the fugitive Delhi army till November 17th, when

(4) Sir Colin Campbell relieved and removed the whole garrison,

(5) leaving Outram with a force at the Alum Bagh, on the outskirts of Lucknow, to hold the access to it, till,

(6) after three months—on March 4th next year, 1858—he attacked the huge triple entrenchments of the enemy round the palaces, and before the end of the month took the city and dispersed the enemy; and,

(7) lastly, clearing the districts around, from Lucknow itself as a centre, hemmed in the remains of the rebel army into the northern frontiers, and drove it thence into the Nepal mountains, when it totally disappeared.

Meanwhile, Sir Hugh Rose from Bombay, and other columns from Madras, had been clearing the Central India districts, and taken Jhansi, leaving the enemy holding no position of defence. But latterly there were other masses of the defeated enemy still in the field, chiefly towards Gwalior. Sikh levies having now been largely added to our army, these several gatherings there of the mutineers or rebel troops were systematically attacked and crushed, the last being, as already mentioned, Tantia Topee.

Thus the war, which had been brought on by the Mutiny, and had been designed to sweep the British out of India, had now become narrowed instead to certain northern districts, as has been described, and was in fact finished off in less than two years from its start. The political result was the transfer of the Government from the East India Company to the Queen, and the institution of more businesslike arrangements and extensive material improvements

for the ring fence empire which Lord Dalhousie had acquired, and Lord Canning had secured, for Great Britain.

Both of James Browne's brothers had before this time been out in India. The elder of them, John, of the Civil Service, who had won high honours at Oxford and at Haileybury, had gone to Bengal, and was now stationed at Dinajpore, between Calcutta and the Himalaya Mountains to its north. The country there had become disturbed, but nothing special needs to be recorded respecting him.

But of Robert, the story and fate were thought so interesting that they were included in the scanty intelligence that was sent from the force with Havelock at Cawnpore to the army before Delhi. He had been appointed to the 56th N. I. which was stationed at the Gehenna of Cawnpore. But he was away from the headquarters of his regiment when the rising occurred; so he escaped the massacre and catastrophe there. By good luck, he had been sent on detachment duty to Humeerpore and other outposts; and when the Sepoys there broke out, he and the other officers in the neighbourhood escaped to the jungles bordering the Ganges, and there hid in the hope of coming across some friendly force that might be marching up country from the south.

There they wandered for five weeks, encountering grave perils and attacks, and all of them, except Browne himself, meeting their death, being either drowned or murdered, or killed fighting, or succumbing to illness or privation. At last, when so ill, and so starved and exhausted, as to be on the point of death, he was lighted on, in a hut where he was lying hid, by a *soubahdar* (native captain) of the Madras army, named Gunga Singh. This officer, heartily



SOUBAHDAR GUNGA SINGH.

[*To face p.* 22.

loyal, secured a pony, carried out the emaciated Browne in his arms, placed him on the pony, and conveyed him thus, gradually, by secret paths, till they lighted on Havelock's army.

Browne, on so reaching the camp, was in such a desperate state that the general proposed to send him to Calcutta. But he entreated to be allowed to remain, as he felt already that he was recovering. So he stopped with the camp, did, as a fact, recover health and strength, joined Havelock's Volunteer Cavalry, and fought in seven of the actions in the operations for the relief, or, as it was afterwards called, the reinforcement, of the garrison of the Lucknow Residency. But, alas! he was attacked by cholera, and succumbed to the fell disease.

The *soubahdar*, it may be mentioned, was made much of and well rewarded, receiving a handsome presentation medal with a suitable inscription, various military honours, and a valuable *jagheer*, or grant of land.

The intelligence of his brother's adventures was of course most exciting to James at Addiscombe, but the later news of his death was a crushing blow. This, combined with some of the darker features and episodes of the war, materially affected his state of feeling during the last term of his cadetship, and the vigour of his work. But it did not do so sufficiently to prevent his gaining the prize at which he had been aiming—an appointment to the Bengal Engineers. In December, 1857, he left Addiscombe. Browne came out third in the list of Engineers—but the second on the list died while at Chatham, so that Browne stood second of those who reached India.

His comrades posted with him to the Bengal list were Conway Gordon and Carter (afterwards Carter-

Campbell); and those to Bombay were Mant and A. R. Seton. These, with Vibart, Manderson, Lovett, Home, Skipwith, Edward Trevor, and Jopp, all about the same standing, were his firm friends through life.

All these young Engineer officers went to Chatham for the prescribed course of practical professional instruction. They tried hard, of course, to be allowed to go out at once to India and have a chance of taking part in the later stages of the war. But this was not to be; and it was not until after the completion, in the middle of 1859, of the usual residence at Chatham that Browne proceeded to Calcutta, to start on his Indian career.

It may be added that, in consequence of the lessons of the Crimean war, the Chatham course had been extended and improved, both as to the subjects, and in the severity of the study. The period spent there was no longer regarded, as of old, in the light of a time for more or less of a holiday, after the continued strain at Addiscombe, and before embarking on one's practical career.

One point to notice when Browne is thus about to land in India is that he was quite exceptional in respect of the strength and personal effect of his religious convictions. This is all that need be said of them at this period, except that he never obtruded them, though they were ingrained and fundamental, and that they influenced his every action.

We now come to the state of affairs in India after the Mutiny and the start of the new *régime*.

The fundamental change lay in the rapid and widespread *development* of the principles and methods of administration that had been initiated by Lord Dalhousie[1] in substitution for the more patriarchal

[1] *Vide* page 15.

system that had prevailed. Departments were being everywhere formed for the several classes of duties and work that were required, and were being placed under more suitable and special supervision than of old.

The beneficent system that had been formerly in force, though scarcely thought of or recognised in England, where India was regarded chiefly as a sort of colony for the expatriation of younger sons, had been carefully watched and heartily praised by such men as Montalembert; and the changes now being introduced had to avoid any lessening of the benefits that had attached to that old system.

The most important measure now being started was that of a proper financial and budget system. The monetary transactions of Government, heretofore in a chaotic state, were being brought into order and financial regularity, under the guidance of Mr. Wilson of *The Economist*, who had been sent out to India to organise the Financial Department. The Civil Service, which officered the Civil Departments, was now being entirely recruited by competition which ensured brain power, though it was still doubtful whether it also ensured the continuance of that simple and benevolent tone and that unison with native sentiment which had been held specially to characterise the old Civil Service, and which had been so effective in its influence with the great body of the teeming millions of the population. But the two greatest changes, besides that of the introduction of proper financial management, which affected Browne's career, were those in the army and in the Engineer or Public Works Department.

In the army the abolition of the purchase system removed the obstruction which, as insisted on by the

Duke of Wellington, had barred general commands and staff appointments to officers of Artillery and Engineers; and in India the officers of the new army, in substitution of the old Indian Cavalry and Infantry, were, curious to say, constituted a "Staff Corps," which, at first at any rate, reserved all further staff appointments to its own members, and sedulously excluded officers of Artillery and Engineers save a very few rare exceptions. These *staff* appointments, as they were called, absorbed all the real prizes of the service, not only the army staff, but the political department, the regimental officers of the frontier force, and so forth.

In the course of time the rigidity of this exclusiveness was gradually reduced. One R.E. was actually allowed to become Commander-in-chief. This was Lord Napier of Magdala. And "Buster" Browne was himself the first R.E. to become Q.M.G. of the army. This was done at the instance of Lord Roberts.

At the same time the numbers of the British troops in India were very largely increased beyond the force that had been maintained there before the Mutiny. This, with the claims of improved sanitation, necessitated a very great expansion in the accommodation needed for the British troops both in the plains and in the hills; and with the increasing prominence of the Russian and Eastern questions which had come to the front at the same time, the defence of India—on its frontier, its seaboard, and its interior—had to be thoroughly taken in hand.

Further, the necessity for progress in the material development of the country and its resources, which had been vigorously begun by Lord Dalhousie, had become more and more obvious. Only a very few

important railways had as yet been started, and their management had been left entirely to the agency of State guaranteed companies; but to cope adequately with the real needs of the country, a vast expansion of them and the adoption of other agencies in addition, and of fresh methods, had become indispensable.

Irrigation works for agricultural purposes had always received an exceptional degree of attention—much more, that is, than any other class of enterprise; and some very important canals had already been carried out, or were in progress, in Madras and Scinde, in the North-west Provinces, and the Punjab. But an enormous increase was now felt to be really needed, if only to cope with the famines, more or less prolonged, which were ever recurring and becoming more prominent, and so establishing their claims to attention. All these requirements would obviously make great and special demands on the soldier and the engineer, and give them corresponding opportunities.

In extenuation of the apparent neglect in former days it may perhaps be just to observe that, with the exception of what has been already mentioned, the East India Company had, up to Lord Dalhousie's time, felt that its attention and expenditure must be concentrated on the suppression of anarchy and the promotion of peace, justice, and commerce. It may also be observed that, as before noticed,[1] the native community were so impregnated, by instinct and habits, with suspicion of the objects and aims of their rulers, and of any proposed changes or innovations, that much precaution and care were needed for their introduction—as, for instance, in the case of the electric telegraph. This tendency to suspicion had been one of the most effective handles used for the

[1] *Vide* page 15.

propagation of the Mutiny. The people were content with their own style of country (non-macadamised) roads, with ferries instead of bridges, and so forth. There was not an iron bridge in India, except one or two at the capitals, and one at Lucknow; where it had been erected when Oude was a native kingdom, and its Engineer officers could personally influence the Nawab.

Also, very beneficial changes were made in the accounts of engineer operations, in part of the arrangements instituted by Mr. Wilson. These changes removed the overwhelming and prolonged monetary responsibility which had formerly attached to the Engineers pending the audit of their expenditure, in which the delay of many years was the chief characteristic, a veritable scandal and disgrace to the Government.

To meet the increase in the engineer work various schemes were more or less adopted. One was an addition to the corps of Royal Engineers. Another was that of recruiting from the trained young Civil Engineers in England, besides a sprinkling of older and more experienced men. And eventually this was supplemented by the institution of the Cooper's Hill College. Of course, every now and then engineers left the service of the guaranteed railways and took employment under Government; but this did not occur to any great extent till ten years later.

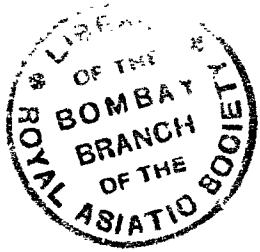
But till then there was considerable friction between those several classes of engineers, and jealousy of the Royal Engineers, many of whom, on the other hand, had their time and professional ability frittered away on petty barrack work in the several cantonments, as the military stations were called.

Another point which should be referred to, before leaving this subject, is the condition of the British

troops in India at that time. The enormous increase in their numbers made the provision of shelter for them very difficult. At first it could not be other than inadequate or unsuitable. The result was appalling mortality; and it was not till the wise and beneficent Lord Napier of Magdala forced this matter into prominence, meeting with much obloquy and ridicule at the time, that this mortality was reduced by four-fifths, mostly through the provision of healthy barracks, on healthy sites, and of facilities for a healthier life. The state of matters was, at first, nearly as bad for the officers and their families, while all expenses and the price of everything had risen enormously. Government adopted many steps to lessen the difficulties that had resulted, but it took a long time to make the state of matters tolerable. The soldiers' wives and families were at first in great difficulties, but the extension of Sir Henry Lawrence's asylums afforded the best help of all. It was a long time before the soldiers' wives could come to terms with the natives. The marketing was curious. It was odd to hear the intended inquiry, "How much for this sheep's head?" expressed in the vernacular thus: "What o'clock this sheep's hat?"

Again, another feature which may be usefully mentioned in the change now begun in the State of India was in regard to the feeling between the English community and the natives. The tendency of the new English residents to dislike the natives, owing in a measure to a mistaken idea of their conduct in connection with the late rising, was more or less reasonable, but the special point now referred to is "domestic service." Nothing, on the whole, could be more praiseworthy than the conduct of the servants of English families and regiments during the Mutiny;

but the servants then extant exhausted the whole habitual trained supply. Hence the wants of the enormous increase of the English military community could not be met except from a very inferior and wholly untrained and unfit section of the native population. Naturally very bad and mischievous relations arose between the new English community and their domestics. And for some time this unpleasantness extended unfortunately to their demeanour towards natives in general, of all classes.



CHAPTER III

BEGINNING OF BROWNE'S INDIAN CAREER: 1860

THE WUZEEREE CAMPAIGN — BROWNE JOINS UNDER POLLARD'S COMMAND—WUZEEREE CHARACTERISTICS —A NIGHT ATTACK—ADVANCE OF THE FORCE— CAPTURE OF KANAGORUM AND MAKEEN, AND END OF THE WAR—WORK AT ATTOCK—LOCAL FANATICISM.

THE last chapter has described at some length the public outlook when Browne arrived in Calcutta towards the end of 1859. He was kept there only a few weeks while the Government were deciding where to send him; and during that short stay, besides spending some pleasant days with his brother John, he studied the system and arrangements of his future departmental duties, and then started off to join the headquarters of the Sappers and Miners at Roorkee.

There too his stay was short, lasting only a few weeks, during which he was doubtless keeping his eyes and ears well open; and then came rumours of a row with some of the tribes on the north-west frontier, for the suppression of which a detachment of the Sappers would be needed. Then, as all the seniors were already otherwise engaged, Browne, the youngest officer of the corps, was dispatched, in command of two companies, to the seat of operation,

distant some 700 miles—rather an onerous charge for an absolute novice.

The tribe concerned bore the name of the Mahsood Wuzeerees; and the tract they occupied was opposite part of the Punjab frontier lying between Dera Ishmael Khan and Bunnoo.

Without dealing at present with the general question of frontier quarrels and raids, it may be mentioned that there had been already twenty-two expeditions carried out by the British Government against one or other of these border tribes during the eleven years that had elapsed since the annexation of the Punjab in 1849. One had been in close proximity to the site of the impending operations. Two others also had been near it, slightly farther to the south; but the other nineteen had all been more northerly, in the neighbourhood of Kohat or Peshawur. All these expeditions had been conflicts with Pathan tribes. There had been none at all in the still more southerly district, where the trans-frontier tribes included Beloochees as well as Pathans. It will be explained presently that most Pathans are fanatical, but the Beloochees are not, and also what other differences there are between these two races.

To revert to Browne, it was doubtless a trying task, for one so recently arrived in India, to carry out the responsibility of this march. He had scarcely had time to acquire even a smattering of the vernacular, or of the details of the management and command of native troops; but apparently he got through the march with perfect success. Railroads there were none, and he had simply to march the regulation stages by the, as yet, unfinished trunk roads *viâ* Umballa and Loodiana, and onwards across the

whole of the Doabs[1] of the Punjab, up to Attock, and thence descend by boat down the Indus to Tank, near Dera Ishmael Khan, the rendezvous of the column which was to carry out the expedition against the Mahsood Wuzeeree tribe.

There he found himself, on April 15th, under the direct command of Captain Pollard, R.E., and attached to a force of about 5,000 men, which included that superb corps, The Guides, and of which the general officers were General Sir Neville Chamberlain and Brigadier Lumsden—both of them distinguished commanders.

General Neville Chamberlain had been noted from his earliest days as a brilliant and valuable officer, as well as an unrivalled swordsman. He had served throughout the Afghan war, the Gwalior campaign, the Sutlej and Punjab wars, and the siege of Delhi, where he had been adjutant-general of the army; and he was now the commandant on the Punjab frontier.

Brigadier Harry Lumsden, usually known by the "happily chosen name of Joe," had first served with Pollock in Afghanistan, and then in the Sutlej and Punjab campaigns. He had already been appointed to the exceptional duty of raising the corps of Guides, which attained the very zenith of soldier fame and repute with its deeds in the Mooltan campaign and in the Mutiny, when it had marched its 600 miles to Delhi in twenty-two days, and joined in action on the day of its arrival; losing in the engagement the gallant young Quentin Battye, who died with the

[1] Doab—*i.e.* Do Ab—means country lying between two rivers. Thus Baree Doab lies between the Beas and the Ravee; the Rechna between the Ravee and the Chenab; the Jech between the Jhelum and the Chenab.

old classic quotation on his lips, "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori." After some ceaseless partisan warfare on the frontier, he had been selected by Lord Canning for deputation, with his brother, Captain Peter Lumsden, and a medical officer, Dr. Bellew, on a mission to Candahar, to support there during the Mutiny the friendly policy of the Ameer Dost Mahomed. After the neck of the Mutiny had been broken, Lumsden had returned to Peshawur—and now he had come down with his beloved Guides to Dera Ishmael Khan for the Wuzeeree expedition.

A memoir which has been written of General Lumsden shows what a character these Wuzeerees bore, both as fighters and as ruthless marauders; but it may be specially mentioned here that, irrespective of the character of the people, the geographical position which they occupied was one of the highest strategical importance to the British Government. It commanded and held the two great *kafila* routes from the Punjab into Central Afghanistan, to Ghuznee and to Khelat-i-Ghilzie, respectively. And the weakness of our administration and of the Government of India cannot fail to be recognised when it may be plainly mentioned that, however victorious we may have been in this and other later contests with these Wuzeerees, we have never, until the present (Lord Curzon's) rule, forced that tribe to yield to us the possession of those routes and the command of those entrances into the adjacent country. This has to be mentioned in direct explanation of the case and of the necessity of these operations.

The position, character, and attitude of the enemy must now be described. Their habitual boast, which

they repeated to our general and to Pollard,[1] was the distich:

> Kings they have come, and kings they have gone—
> Never a king of them tribute has won.

This indicated the general attitude of the Wuzeerees, which was apt to end in violent aggression on their neighbours.

They had recently committed a very truculent raid, and their special iniquity now was their refusal to pay the fine levied by Government for that deed; and the object of the expedition was to enforce the penalty and capture their chief stronghold, Kanagorum, which they fondly believed to be impregnable, if not actually inaccessible.

Browne had reached his post to the very day, for on the morrow, April 16th, the force crossed the border and entered Wuzeeree territory, which was quite unknown to us save by native rumours. It had never before been entered by an Englishman, but it was understood to be an entangled mass of mountains, in some five ranges, with crests rising from 5,000 to upwards of 12,000 feet, accessible only by the defiles of another quite separate range, the Suliman, with streams or rivers, some of which attained a breadth of 1,000 yards.

Shortly before this the Wuzeerees had received a sharp check, which had led them to keep to their own hills while the expeditionary force was assembling. The incident was this. The first party of the British force to appear in this neighbourhood, in advance of the rest, was a detachment of about 150 Native Cavalry, under the command of a very smart and knowing old *ressaldar*, or native officer. Hearing

[1] Browne's immediate commander—*vide* page 33.

of their arrival, some 3,000 of the enemy poured out from their hills to the plains to attack this party. The wily *ressaldar*, affecting to retire before them, drew on these Wuzeerees after him, and handled his men so as to make it appear that they were gradually getting more and more disorganised. But when he had thus drawn the Wuzeerees, all infantry of course, some three miles away from their hills, he suddenly halted, threw his men into proper formation, and with a volley and a cheer charged home into the mass of the enemy and drove them back in hot flight to their own hills, the ground being strewn with some 200 of their dead before they reached their shelter.

It will be understood that at this time Browne was, for practical purposes, an entire novice. Everything in this Derajat country was absolutely new to him, and as perfectly the opposite as it could well be of anything he had hitherto experienced or seen. And there can be no doubt that he was at once, and strongly, impressed with the manly and vigorous style of men, friends or foes, with whom he was now coming in contact; and, however strong his combative tendency, he felt, at the same time, that they were people to whom he could be, as he eventually was, very warmly disposed. This must have eased his feelings and helped him to tackle the heavy work and labour now before him, and also led him not merely to carry out his current military duties, but to acquire the language of the country and gain good practical knowledge.

Next day, April 16th, the force started into the hills; and after penetrating some twenty-five miles, it split up into two parties, of which the smaller one, of some 1,500 men under Lumsden, halted at Palosin, with the camp and stores, while Chamberlain, with

the larger party, advanced farther, exploring the adjacent valleys. Browne was left with Lumsden's camp.

A few days afterwards—on April 23rd, to be precise—a compact body of 3,000 Wuzeerees attacked Lumsden's camp at early dawn, overpowered the pickets and some irregular levies, and then dashed sword in hand onwards. But Lumsden soon got his troops into formation, and holding the enemy in front with his Guides whom they had attacked, swung his Ghoorkas and Sikhs round on their flank and repulsed them. Then he turned the check into a complete rout, pursuing the enemy over the hills, and giving them no breathing time, till they broke up thoroughly and dispersed in all directions. The Wuzeerees left behind dead in the camp some 130 men, including their chief.

It was here that the first of Browne's adventures, of which so many are told, is said to have occurred. The attack was a surprise, and Browne was in his night dress; not finding his sword at once, he is said to have seized one of the light poles of his *shemiana*, or small tent, and swept down the raiders with it.

Next morning the whole force advanced, the enemy essaying in vain to check them by proposals for a parley; and on May 4th the real fight came off in the Burrera Tonga Pass, which they had fortified with terraces of stone breastworks, and strong and thick abattis. Our troops were formed in three columns. The enemy, supposing they had checked the first column, charged the force; on which the whole three columns, acting in concert, drove them back, and accompanying them into the defences (where the gallant Keves cut down their chief), then drove

them out, and pursued them over the hills, leaving the ground thickly strewn with their dead.

These two fights, at Palosin and Burrera Tonga, were the only real combats in the campaign, and the road was now clear to the enemy's chief stronghold of Kanagorum. This was reached next day; and, though reputed to be impregnable, it came to satisfactory terms forthwith, and was spared the destruction which had threatened it. Parties of the victorious troops entered and walked quietly about the fort and position, much surprising the wild mountaineers by their peacefulness and *camaraderie*. A Syud who watched them could not refrain from calling out, "Well done, British justice!" an effusive testimony to the unexpected British discipline and British character and conduct which is said to have pleased the general as much as his military success.

In less than a week the force left Kanagorum on its march back, or rather round towards British territory, and swept northward for some 160 miles through the whole length of Wuzeeree Land to its northerly exit at Bunnoo. On its route it meted out punishment to those sections of the tribe that had earned it, and searched out and destroyed their principal strongholds.

The chief position thus dealt with was Makeen, a group of villages with a specially large collection of strong towers. These towers were all levelled to the ground, but not till after some delay—longer delay than Sir Neville liked. But blasting the large solid bases of such towers could not be done in a moment. One of them, for instance, which Browne destroyed, was forty feet high, square in plan, with a side of only twenty-five feet; but, up to a height of eighteen feet, this square was of solid stonework,

the whole of which he had to blast to pieces. All the work was similar.

After this the force again went onwards toward Bunnoo, Browne continuing these demolitions, clearing the road and removing obstructions as the force advanced; and also triangulating, surveying, and mapping the country, and joining of course in any combats that occurred. Such was the work of Browne and his Sappers in this expedition, which, though brisk while it lasted, was over in a month, the closing task being the construction of a road for the guns through the Ruzmuk Pass at a height of 7,300 feet above sea level. On clearing out of the Wuzeeree country and reaching Bunnoo, the force was broken up, on May 19th; and Browne, who received high praise for his conduct in the expedition, was then posted to engineer work at Attock, on the Indus.

It may be here noticed, as a matter of personal interest, that Browne and his family were brought repeatedly into contact with this Mahsood Wuzeeree clan. In later years he surveyed their country and passes, reported on their communications, and organised the system of blockade by which only have they been kept under control. His brother-in-law, Pierson, of his own corps, contracted a fatal illness and died during one of the expeditions against them; and a year after Browne's own death, his eldest son fell a victim to a treacherous attack in one of these Wuzeeree villages.

This was Browne's first contact with the men of the frontier, and before the expedition was over he had advanced far in power of conversing both in the ordinary vernacular and in the Pushtoo and local dialects of the border tribes, and further, had shown a wonderful aptitude for dealing with the men.

His quickness in acquiring the vernacular was exceptional and marked, and widely recognised. It was doubtless due in a great measure to his fine ear for music; but he attributed it more to the training during his earlier years in speaking so many of the colloquial languages of Europe—English, French, German, and Italian.

In this expedition, too, he had specially gauged the feeling and bearing of the Pathan and other border men in that neighbourhood towards the English. They were exceedingly brave, manly, and bold. They had not fought against the English for many years; and they had sent many men to join our Punjab and frontier regiments, and to take part in the storming of Delhi and other operations for the suppression of the Mutiny. They were a race with whom firmness, authority, and vigour, as well as tact, were necessary to keep them under proper control. And well it was for Browne that he had thus early acquired, under exceptionally good frontier officers, sound and correct ideas on this point, and had, as already noted, taken a liking to the race.

For now, after four months of purely military experience, he was appointed, in July, 1860, to the Public Works Department of the Punjab, and posted in almost solitary positions to works at Attock, and at isolated posts there and on the Indus and near Peshawur, among a wild Pathan people.

This first expedition was all the more valuable when followed by his new appointment. For in that Wuzeeree expedition he had been brought into immediate contact with a peculiar and typical tribe. Though Pathans of the proudest and fiercest type, they were situate in the central ground between the exclusively Pathan districts on their north and the

more Beloochee races to the south, and were comparatively free from the ruthless religious fanaticism of the tribes that stretched northwards to the River Attock and into the Himalayan Mountains beyond. His first experience therefore—and a very practical one it was—of the Pathan race was not the same as if it had been that of the more northerly and very fanatical tribes, and he was able to start on his new work with a more favourable idea than he might have otherwise formed of the temper and character of the Pathan workpeople with whom he was now to be brought into the closest contact.

Further, he had come under the eyes and won the friendship of the two leading men upon that frontier, Sir Neville Chamberlain and Colonel Lumsden, who were also cognisant of the fact that Browne's whole experience of India had been of less than six months' duration, and appreciated the excellent use which he had made of it.

Neither the exigencies of the work on which he had been engaged nor the inaccessibility of its locality had admitted of his acquiring properly the public knowledge of outside general events for which he thirsted. For great events were stirring everywhere: in America the slavery crisis and civil war; even in England the anxieties that were creating the Volunteer movement, of which the suggestion originated from Louis Napoleon; in India, besides the matters already mentioned, the aggressive movements of Russia from the north. She had not only been in contest with the Khirgiz in the north, but had been threatening the Khokand and Bokhara States; and Kharikoff's mission, which had started early in 1858 for the exploration of Khorasan, had travelled as far as Herat. But on essaying to advance still farther

India-wards, he had been checked by Dost Mahomed's fidelity to his treaty and alliance with us, and had consequently returned to Teheran.

In moving from Wuzeeree Land to Attock, Browne was suddenly brought into close contact with—into the very midst of—a race differing in one most important point, *fanaticism*, from those with whom he had hitherto been dealing. This fanaticism, as already noted, did not exist at all in Wuzeeristan, or to its south, and had penetrated only slightly to its northern borders; but in the Eusufzai districts, Peshawur and Attock, and the northern hills, it was fierce and bitter, and Ghazees abounded. Englishmen carried their lives in their hands, and the outlook for any one who had to mix freely with the people was not apparently very promising. Browne, however, was quite impervious to such ideas, and his feeling and attitude to these wild people were quite unique. Hence, before proceeding with his personal story, the origin and the particulars of this fanaticism may perhaps be first described, with its spread and growth, in these parts, at the time of the Sikh advance to the west of the Indus River, its condition when the British power replaced the Sikh rule, and its later history.

In the descriptions given by native historians of olden days, no fanatical feeling, indeed hardly any religious feeling at all, was shown as existing among the Afreedee or other neighbouring tribes about Peshawur, before the Sikh power crossed to the west of the Indus. It is since then that an exceptionally great change of religious feeling, with the rise of intense fanaticism, has begun and spread among the clans there—the Orakzais, Afreedees, Khyberees, Eusufzais, and the like.

It is very likely that so long as the rulers of the Indus districts of the Punjab, including Hazara and Kashmir, were Mahomedans, there was no need or necessity for any mullah or priestly pretender to come forward and stir up a religious war; for the strife would have been only between Moslem and Moslem. When the Moghul emperors or their Mahomedan or Hindoo lieutenants moved troops to conquer the country of any independent tribe, it was done to increase the power of a Mahomedan empire; and the mullahs would far rather have assisted the attack than opposed it. The resistance offered by the tribe would be due solely to the objection that any brave and independent race would have to the notion of conquest—to the indignity of seeing their country attacked and annexed by any one else, and not to any question of religion. Mullah fanaticism was never at the base of any such opposition or struggle. But when the soldiers of the Sikh "Lion of Lahore," having first annexed the different districts and quarters of the Punjab itself from the hands of the previous effete Moghul and Barakzai rulers, gradually acquired Hazara and Peshawur, and other trans-Indus districts, then the matter took quite a different turn; and the year 1825 saw the rise and commencement of that fanatical hostility and progress which have helped to cement the opposition of the Mahomedans—first against the Sikhs, and afterwards against their successors, the British.

It may be useful to describe first very briefly the career of one or two of these fanatical priests or pretenders, or whatever name one cares to call them by, who did so much to give and cause incessant trouble during recent years.

The first to be mentioned is Sayad Ahmad Shah

of Bareilly. It was in the year 1824 that, having journeyed to Calcutta, and thence to Mecca, and returned by way of Candahar and Cabul, Sayad Ahmad appeared in the plains of Eusufzai with *forty* Hindustanee followers, and proclaimed himself champion of Islam! Who could have judged, or imagined, that this first pretender, with his small gathering, would one day secure Peshawur, and have the means of opposing the whole of the Sikh power? Who could have believed, at that period, that the followers of this one man would afterwards force on the English Government the campaign of 1853, the affair of Shekh Jana, 1858, the expedition against the Khuddu Khels, 1858, the subsequent conflicts such as the Ambeyla campaign, 1863, and the Black Mountain expeditions of 1868 and 1888? But, as it turned out, his arrival in the Eusufzai country proved a success. The simple and superstitious people there at once flocked to the standard, and his small Hindustanee band was forthwith increased to 900 men by recruits from India. Collecting his gathering, and assisted by the Khans of Hund and Zeyda, and the followers of the Peshawur Sardars, Sayad Ahmad determined in 1827 to offer battle to the Sikhs, and moved eastwards with the intention of laying siege to the fort of Attock. But Runjeet Singh had timely warning of what was going on, and Sayad Ahmad had barely reached Saidu when Runjeet's famous general, Harree Singh, having a large force at Attock, sent Budh Singh with a strong command across the Indus to meet the Pathan host at Saidu. As, however, his Peshawur supporters promptly disappeared, Sayad Ahmad suffered a crushing defeat, and fled with a few followers to Lund Khwar, to Swat, and then to Boner.

After that, however, he was invited to return to Eusufzai by certain of its Khans, who promised to help and assist him. Accordingly he once more proceeded there, and thousands, including various other chiefs, swarmed to his standard. It was here that he seems to have first met that notoriety, Abdul Ghaffur of Jabrai, in Upper Swat, known also as the hermit of Beka, the Balajee, and still better in later days as the *Akhoond Sahib* of Swat. He appears, before this, to have joined in the slaughter of Khadi Khan of Hund, the treacherous chief who had revealed the secret of the proposed attack on the fort of Attock, and had in consequence brought on the disaster at Saidu.

Sayad Ahmad then proceeded to Panjtar, where Fatteh Khan gave him a warm welcome, and assisted him in his undertakings. He then subdued the Khans of Hoti and Hund, and in a night attack defeated the Barakzai Sardars who had advanced to Zeyda. In 1829 he again defeated the same Sardars at Hoti, and, following up his victory, secured possession of Peshawur.

These contests were all with his Mahomedan co-religionists; and were continued with them till at length his aggressiveness, and still more his obnoxious edicts regarding their women, stirred up the enmity of the whole Pathan community; and, in the massacre that followed, thousands of his disciples were slaughtered. After this, Sayad Ahmad, Sayad Ismail, and the ever-increasing colony of Hindustanees, now numbering some 1,600, were compelled to cross the Indus and take shelter in the Punjab, in Balakot, where other followers were coming in to join him. But the Sikh general, Sher Singh, was not the man to stand this, and, without losing any time, he marched at once

against the Sayad and defeated him in a pitched battle in which Sayad Ahmad himself, his principal officers, and the mass of his men were either cut down or driven into the River Indus and drowned. Only 300 men managed to escape, and these no doubt went and joined other gatherings, and helped to inflame the minds of the Pathans inside, as well as those of the tribesmen outside, of the Peshawur district, against the heretical Sikh. It is because he was the first and chief originator of this priestly fanaticism—which has since his days played so important a part in all fights and campaigns, whether against the Sikhs or ourselves—that we have recorded this history of him. But such briefly was the career of Sayad Ahmad, the first of their fanatical leaders.

The Sikh rule on the frontier was, it may be mentioned, a stern and harsh if not a cruel one: the slightest offence against person or property invariably led to the extreme penalty of death. If a village failed to pay its quota of revenue, a force was led out against it, the residents were shot down, and the village walls levelled with the ground. The Sardars and farmers of the revenue, whenever the farming system was established, were equally harsh and oppressive towards the inhabitants; and as they were supported by the Sikh power, the latter came in for the extra share of hatred brought on by the conduct of these understrappers. Hence the independent frontier hill country gradually became full of men, who had fled there from the Punjab plains for protection against the oppression of the Sikhs; and these refugees, assisted by the numerous mullahs, talibs, and disciples of Sayad Ahmad, Abdul Ghaffur, and others of less note, gradually led all the followers of



CABULEES.

[*To face p.* 46.

Islam—inside and outside the border land—to hate virulently the heretical and infidel Sikh.

When afterwards the English power replaced the Sikh, the Afghan hatred towards the latter was at its very height; and as no steps were taken to avert the tendency, we, as the successors of the Sikhs in the rule of the country, came in for a full share of the same. As an Afghan gentleman of great influence has said, "The behaviour of the Sikhs had made it very difficult for the English to win the regard and affections of the Afghan population." A few years of a steady course of kind treatment has certainly gained for us their respect, but the hatred of the mullahs, both inside and outside our borders, remains unaltered; the former may veil and conceal their inward feelings, but the latter vaunt their dislike and enmity openly, and preach their "*ghaza*" and "*jehad*" just as devoutly as ever. Thus was it that, in acquiring the Punjab, we also succeeded to the Sikh inheritance of the hatred towards them of the border Mahomedans.

What has been above written describes the real origin and opening phases of the fanaticism under reference; but some further instances and remarks may tend to stamp the characteristics more thoroughly.

After Sayad Ahmad the next priestly adventurer was Abdul Ghaffur, the recluse of Beka, best known as the Akhoond, whose name has already been mentioned as having met Sayad Ahmad in Eusufzai. Abdul Ghaffur had now settled down at Saidu, in Swat, where he married a woman of the Akhoond Khel clan, and had two sons and a daughter; and, leading a life of perfect austerity for many years, he managed to secure an enormous ascendency over the minds of the Mahomedans, while his fame spread to all quarters. Ther in 1849, on the British

becoming owners of the Peshawur district, he, the Akhoond, became mischievous, and encouraged the Swat marauders to raid into the plains of Eusufzai and disturb the peace of that border from Abazai to the Indus; and in the strife that then ensued there fell into our hands a letter fron the Akhoond which authorised the murder of all Europeans and Hindoos in the Peshawur valley, and of all Mahomedans in British service. So our eyes were opened to the malign influence at work.

But no immediate action was necessary, for our recent operations against the Utman Khels and others near them had opened the eyes of the people of Swat to the dangers they were incurring by sending marauders into our territory, and they had become fearful lest their own country might not just as easily be overrun by the British arms. They therefore held their hand, and, till 1863, did little beyond appointing a titular king, who died early, and was the first and last king of Swat. Hence the Akhoond's efforts collapsed, and he almost disappeared until 1863. When the story reaches the events of that year, we shall hear more of him.

CHAPTER IV

NORTH FRONTIER ENGINEER WORK: 1860–3

WORK AT ATTOCK—THE BARA BRIDGE—EXPERIENCE OF A FLOODED RIVER — BROWNE'S METHODS — PUNJAB FRONTIER DIVISION.

HAVING finished this digression to the matter of the fanaticism on the northern borders, we return to Browne, whom we left about to join at Attock, an historical fort and position commanding the passage of the Indus—the greatest of the Western Himalaya rivers. At this time Lord Canning was still the viceroy, and was visiting these northern regions to learn personally the development of the Punjab which Lord Dalhousie had started by Henry Lawrence's agency and had checked under Sir John's. Browne's actual charge was the Indus section of the Lahore and Peshawur road; and, with numerous other officers, he was under the executive control of Colonel Alexander Taylor, already so pre-eminent as an engineer at Delhi and Lucknow. Of Taylor it is said that John Nicholson had announced in his dying hours that, if he lived, the world should know that it was Alick Taylor who had taken Delhi. Now Browne was a man after Taylor's own heart, and a warm and lasting friendship at once sprang up between the two. Taylor was the ablest and soundest of engineers, and under him Browne was thrown into a congenial atmosphere of

real work, with full scope for his own ingenuity and skill, and into the midst of the very class of natives with whom he was best suited to deal.

Here too, with all the exceptional characteristics of the life, the locality, and the people, he was in the very centre of the experiences that were best suited to him, and that gave the tone to his whole future life—the tone of simplicity and vigour, and earnestness. The variety of the people he had to deal with was very great; but he soon singled out and made special friends of the men of the Ghilzye tribes from the heart of Afghanistan.

His first employment was at the Attock fort itself, and for the clearance of whatever was in confusion or arrears, especially as regarded the accounts. He was wont afterwards to refer occasionally to "the fearful and wonderful questions from the Audit Office." What would he have said to the older system!

This done, his first special task was the construction of the Indus Tunnel Drift, eight feet broad and seven feet high, passing under the bed of the Indus at the Attock ferry. At this, and at other work on the river there or its banks, he remained for a few months, during which he came to know the people and their ways and language.

Up till now he had not had much real opportunity, however great his anxiety, to acquire a knowledge of public events and of the position on and beyond the frontier. But he soon learned what has been described in the last chapters, and also the anxiety caused by the aggressive attitude of Russia in one direction and by the fanatical action of the Wahabee sect in another, with its special centralisation in the mountains to the immediate north of Attock.

One particular point may be mentioned—almost a

family matter, but of some importance and interest in his career: the presence at Peshawur of his brother-in-law, Robert Clark—a leading and very influential missionary, who, with his colleague, Mr. Lowenthal, was exercising a valuable influence there—not merely local, but widespread. With their religious views and broad-minded aims in entire unison, their nearness and accessibility to each other was a matter of much happiness to Browne.

Another strong friendship was also now formed at Peshawur—to wit, with Captain, afterwards Sir John, McQueen, an officer who had distinguished himself greatly during the Mutiny. At the first outset he had made his mark, by practically checking the Peshawur rising at the very moment of its outbreak. A jovial Highlander, of herculean frame, he had been a keen student of native athletics—a noted performer in the *akhara*, as the wrestling-ground of the Sepoy and other native gymnasts is called. This was a practice very prevalent in those days, when brigadiers and officers of standing were renowned champions. McQueen's special trainer had been the right-hand grenadier of his company—a favourite soldier. But he had been poisoned with the taint of the Mutiny; and on the great general parade designed for the disarming of the Sepoys, this champion had suddenly sprung forward out of the ranks and shouted to his comrades to rise. But McQueen, on the alert, felled him senseless with the hilt of his sword. The effect was electric—the outbreak was averted. With McQueen's example, Browne eventually took to the *akhara*, as he did to everything athletic when he had a chance; but at present he was a novice. A specially close and intimate friendship was also now begun with his

brother Engineer officer, Henry Blair, whose name can never be disassociated from the frontier.

In those days, owing to the unfinished state of the roads, and for other reasons, there was not much travelling of the English upper classes, especially of ladies; and, as the nature of the work—in the midst of river foundations and the like—demanded it, Browne was as much in the beds of the river and streams as on dry land, and on such occasions was of course clad in the customary bathing costume. "Oh, look at that man down there!" was an exclamation once heard; "he is so fair, you could hardly suppose him to be a native." "Well," was the answer, "he may look *white* enough, but he is really *Browne*!"

In these first days he had one experience which must be mentioned. The workmen had taken a fancy for him, especially the Ghilzyes. But there were also Afreedees, Eusufzais—and other tribesmen from the surrounding clans—and these were all much impressed not only with his cheeriness and good-nature, but also with his physique, and, in talking of it, are supposed to have chaffed one of their own body, a noted *puhlwan*, or wrestler, with invidious comparisons as to the probable issue in case of a struggle. The natural result followed.

On a fitting chance, the *puhlwan* made some paltry objection to the wage, and receiving the reply expected, rushed at Browne when off his guard and threw him. But, alas for the *puhlwan*! fists had not entered into his training or calculations: the consequence may be imagined, and need not be described. But the struggle had been severe, and it taught Browne that frankness of manner, however telling and of good influence, needs after all the company of some degree of discipline. It will be seen from Colonel Taylor's

remarks[1] how well he learnt the lesson of this experience.

His work involved a good deal of going about—of excursions into the villages of the tribesmen, and of ferrying and boating on the river. There he used to pick up much information, especially latterly, from listening to the talk of the native passengers. On one occasion an amusing and very significant altercation was overheard between a Pathan and a Sikh. The Mahomedan was dilating on the expected advent of a new prophet, the Emam Mehndee, who was to sweep away the English and rule the world with justice. Quoth the Sikh, "Then the Emam himself must be English, for they alone are always victorious, and at the same time just and wise and merciful, and protectors of the poor!"

It was while engaged on these duties, or perhaps on similar work elsewhere, that Browne had to make his bow to his subordinate in a matter which it was his delight to describe. The occasion was one in which he had to use native boats wherewith to form a bridge, and it was necessary to know the safe load that could be carried. His native subordinate, known as the *mistry*, aided him in taking various measurements, and observed that Browne set to work to calculate the displacement, over which he spent much time, covering the papers with figures. On Browne's announcing the result to the *mistry*, he was rather taken aback by being told that he was wrong in his result; and on going again over his figures, he had to acknowledge his mistake. But desiring to know how the *mistry* had arrived at the correct conclusion, the man explained that he had ordered coolies to fill one of the boats till it

[1] See page 57.

sank to the safe load line, and then took out what had been put in and weighed it!

While still an assistant Engineer, and in the same division, Browne was, after a short time, moved from the Indus and appointed to the specific task of the construction of a bridge over the Bara stream, seven miles from Peshawur. In calling the Bara a stream, its ordinary appearance is indicated; but on occasions, especially after heavy rains in the neighbouring hills, it becomes an overwhelming river, a flood, a fierce torrent—which was the factor that regulated the dimensions and character of the bridge, while the unstable and water-logged nature of its bed constituted the real difficulty to be mastered in its actual construction. Incidents, both grave and racy, were ever recurring, and his wits had to be ceaselessly at work. In other respects the construction of the bridge calls for no remark. Its site is where the great Lahore and Peshawur trunk road crosses the Bara, about seven miles to the east of Peshawur. The abutments and piers were of stone and brickwork; the superstructure was of woodwork. The bed, which was of boulders and gravel, did not admit of well sinking. Here at Bara he was favoured with a very exceptional opportunity for using his own wits, and he took full advantage of it. He was practically solitary among these wild Pathan workmen, and it was this isolation which led to his exceptional intimacy with their ways, habits, character, and language, and to his wonderful and lifelong influence with them.

His simple manliness and freedom from conventionalities, his *bonhomie* and joviality, won their hearts and their regard. There was no danger or roughness in the work in which he did not take his full share. Was there any difficulty, under water, in the foun-

dations or otherwise, he would don his bathing-drawers and plunge into the river, so as to learn personally the real situation and ensure that the necessary steps were taken.

The following is an instance in point, from a description given in one of his own letters to his family in June, 1861, of one of the high and sudden floods to which the Bara river was liable. The special feature of the case lay in the fact that a large pile engine had just then arrived—the only one, he was informed, in India—and therefore specially precious.

"Last Saturday," he writes, "I had got it" (the pile engine) "put up all right, a great big timber frame-work about 32 feet high, and about 20 feet long, right in the middle of the river, and expected to begin work with it on the Monday. Early on Sunday morning a man rushed in, saying the river was coming down about 5 feet deep, and that I had better look out. Out I rushed and secured it with chains, ropes, bolts, as best I could (as I had no time to dismantle it), and had barely time to do it before the flood was on us. The engine gently rose, and 'crick, crick' went all the ropes and chains, to my great dismay, but after swaying about a little, it got to its right bearings and manfully stood out. The worst was over, and the chains and ropes seemed quite sound and new. The river did not rise more than 5 feet, but went on flowing quietly at that depth. In the evening all seemed right, and the river was going down, so I went up to the roof of the house and to bed. About twelve o'clock I heard a great shouting from the men I had put on guard higher up the river, and tumbling out in my nightshirt, I rushed on to the pile engine to give the ropes an extra pull or two.

"In about three or four minutes I saw the water coming down, one huge wave, about 200 feet wide and about 16 feet deep, one wall of roaring water. On it came, at the rate of fifteen or sixteen miles an hour, tearing down the river banks as it came, foaming and fretting in the moonlight. It was a very grand sight, but not at all to my liking. By

this time I had about 200 coolies assembled, with guy ropes, so I scuttled on shore and anxiously expected the effect of the first shock. Down it came like a wild beast, breaking high over the pile engine, which bent and swayed and rocked, whilst the chains were tightened till they were like solid bars of iron. Suddenly a great haystack appeared, bearing down with tremendous velocity on my unfortunate charge. One snap, one shock like the report of a rifle, and one of the small chains broke. One after another the chains went, sending the coolies flying in all directions, with cut faces and bruised bodies; and off went the huge machine, bobbing and ducking as if chaffing us all for our trouble. The guy ropes were torn from the coolies' hands in a moment.

"Four of my Sikh guard and myself then plunged in after it, and down we went, holding on like grim death, with a regular pandemonium of blackies rushing all along the bank. First one side, then on the other, going round the corners with tremendous velocity, now turning round and round in an eddy like a top, now plunging along in a straight reach, now stopping for a second and then off again with a jerk. During these manœuvres the Sikhs and myself twisted four of the chains together. These we fastened to the great ram for driving in the piles, a huge mass of iron weighing about 2 tons, which was prevented slipping into the water by two large beams, between which it slid. A carpenter swam out to us with a hatchet, and turn by turn we went at these beams, hitting as never men hit before, till, with a plump, the huge piece of iron slipped into the water. Slower and slower we went along, the chains tightening more and more, with a slip and a jerk now and then, and at last we were still, and firmly moored by the ram, which had caught into the ground and held us firm as a rock. In that short time we had gone down about four and a half miles, and a mile farther on was a fall in the river about 15 feet high. Five minutes more and we would have been over it. We were in no danger, as we could have easily saved ourselves by swimming ashore, but not a vestige of the pile engine would have remained, as it would have been all smashed to pieces in the fall.

"As it is, we have saved everything, thank God.

One of my men was bitten by a snake, of which at least a hundred were crawling about the pile engine. It was nasty seeing their cold scales and eyes glistening about, and feeling afraid of touching anything for fear of being bitten, knowing as we did that most of the snakes were poisonous. The worst of it was that I had to walk home for five miles without shoes, as not a shoe had we in the company. It would have rather startled you to see me walking, as I did, into my bungalow that day in my nightshirt and *praeterea nihil*, and covered with mud and water from head to foot."

The following is an account of his methods and their results from the pen of his distinguished chief, Colonel, now General, Sir Alexander Taylor.

"Early in his service Browne was attached to the Lahore and Peshawur trunk road, then under construction, and was posted as an assistant Engineer to the frontier division near Peshawur.

"The work requiring the earliest attention was the bridge over the Bara River (the same river that caused so much trouble at the end of the recent expedition into Afridi Land), and the chief difficulties in the way of its construction were the depth of the bed, soft mud in which the piers had to be founded, and the liability of the river to sudden and heavy floods.

"Browne put work in hand at the close of the rainy season, and not long after I paid a visit of inspection. In the mud two open excavations for the piers were in hand, and every one was very busy. Near one of the excavations, seated on the top of a not very dry mound of earth, was Browne, his shirt sleeves rolled up and his shirt front open. On the same mound, but on a lower level and somewhat to his left, was a cashier with a supply of small coin. In a similar position, somewhat to his right, was a sweetmeat man, while between them were musicians of the country playing spirit-stirring airs.

"The procedure was this. The mud-drenched coolie came up the slope from the excavation with a basket full of mud on his head. Having emptied the basket in the prescribed place, he walked to the cashier and

received a coin, which he placed in security. He then moved to the sweetmeats, and receiving one, put it into his mouth, much to his satisfaction, while the stirring sounds of the musicians helped to circulate his blood.

"Browne from his mound could see the workmen in the excavation below, and encouraged them by gesture and by words when a pause occurred in the music. So the work went busily on.

"The arrangements answered capitally. It was found to be necessary to carry the foundations to a greater depth than had been expected, but Browne's energy and cheery stimulation rose with the increasing difficulties, and infected every one. The piers were completed before the inevitable flood came. The workmen continued cheery and willing, and the bridge was completed in very satisfactory time. Every one employed on the work had a good word to say for Browne, and all declared that they never saw such a 'sahib' to work for.

"On many occasions in after years I had to visit extensive works on which large numbers of unruly trans-frontier men were employed by him and Blair, and can testify to the extraordinary influence these two officers exercised over them. Browne's way of tackling the difficulty met with much remark and commendation."

While thus working so entirely in unison with these wild tribesmen, being absolutely alone among them, he seized every opportunity and took every means to acquire a thorough knowledge of them. He would join them around the evening watch-fires, share their meals, and learn and sing their songs and ballads, while his clear moral and consistent bearing as a gentleman and a Christian, however hearty and jovial his humour, won their respect.

To his departmental superiors he soon became no less marked as an Engineer of skill and practical ingenuity and resource, especially for such pioneer work; and his admirable management and efficienc

gained for him the complete confidence not only of Sir Alexander Taylor, but of the great body of leading Engineers whose names were household words on that northern frontier; so that he twice received the thanks of Government. Then after two years of work as an assistant Engineer he was promoted to the executive—the independently responsible—grade.

On promotion to the executive grade, his first charge was that of the Kohat division, which included not only his recent charges as a sub-division, but all else in the whole stretch of wild and virgin frontier country extending from Kohat in the north to Kusmore on the Indus far south on the borders of Scinde. To this was shortly afterwards added the Peshawur and Hazara districts, making a division of 400 miles in length! This brought him into intimate contact, through the labour he had to employ, with the whole varied series of wild frontier tribes, mainly Pathan, but partly also Beloochee, occupying the Punjab border, from Bonair and Hazara in the north, through the country of the Eusufzais, Afreedees, and Khyberees, through Kohat, Bunnoo, Tank, and the Derajat, to the Beloochee tracts occupied by the Sheoranees, Khusranees, and Moosa Kheyls, and, still farther south, the Murrees and Bhoogtees. This charge he held until the end of 1863, in a very trying climate and amidst dangerous surroundings.

The variety of the classes of work which he had to carry out was unique. Besides the ordinary buildings required for civil stations and cantonments, such as Peshawur, Kohat, Bunnoo, and Dera Ishmael Khan, he erected churches at Attock and Nowshera, numerous forts all along the frontier, casemated batteries at Khairabad opposite Attock, and barracks, with complete accessory accommodation, for a whole British

regiment, at Peshawur; besides training works for the Indus in the Derajat, well-sinking everywhere, and so on.

Kusmore, at the south end of his charge, was at the bend of the Indus—where the embankments were large, as the site was ticklish, and the results of a breach would be very serious. In later years, he had to deal again with the matter; and he was instrumental in securing attention to the gravity of this question, the security of the course of the Indus—though it has never apparently been thoroughly dealt with to the present day.

At Kooshalgurh, in the course of this work, he narrowly escaped a fatal stoppage of his career. For while he was surveying along the edge of the high bank of the Indus, and moving the telescope of the theodolite round so as to bear from one point to another, he missed his footing and was precipitated down the steep cliff for about fifty feet into the river, and got much bruised and cut and torn, but fortunately no bones were broken. In what might have been a tragedy there was a bit of comedy, for as he went tumbling from one projection to another he continued to hear the cries of the attendants, in great alarm, "Enough, Sahib, enough—stop, stop!"

It may be remarked that the varied districts in which his work lay during these first three years of frontier work, led to an exceptional knowledge not only of this north-western frontier, and of trans-frontier events and politics, but also of the varying characteristics and differences of the several frontier clans, and of the habits and ways, the language and character, of the people generally. It was less an intimacy, such as was customary, with the native officers and troops there—though he also possessed

and enjoyed this to a marked degree—than with the wild tribesmen of the country districts into which no one but he seemed to wander freely; sleeping in their huts, partaking of their hospitality, and joining in their songs and amusements. He saw and benefited by all the better side of their nature, and never seems to have suffered from their fanatical tendencies. As a feature of their exceptional bearing to him, they had no hesitation in sending their women-folk to guide him from one village to another.

While thus engaged vigorously in practical work he learnt and mastered more and more thoroughly the local vernaculars of the tribes, besides studying the Oriental classics, such as Persian and Oordoo, and also learning Beloochee. Lastly, he passed the tests in Pushtoo, and was the first officer in India to do so. This was a valuable acquisition, as it was the vernacular language of the Pathans. In saying that he was the first officer to *pass* in the language, it is not meant that no officer had previously studied and acquired it; but previously there had been no test or recognition for the study. Sir Luther Vaughan had produced textbooks for the language, and was, so to speak, a past master when Browne was under examination.

At this epoch, it may be mentioned, he was devoted to engineering, and used to express the utmost repugnance to turning to the civil, the political, or any other line of employment.

The excessive burden imposed upon Browne during the short time he was at Peshawur is obvious. But in his letters he comments but slightly on this, dwelling more on the satisfaction of having his time fully occupied, and being free from any inducement to spend the midday of the hot summer months in

sleep like the majority of officers on cantonment duty!

To turn to the outside world, the Russians had been advancing in the more northern regions of Central Asia; but had not been attracting much *public* attention. The famous Ameer of Afghanistan, Dost Mahomed, had died during the middle of the year, and consequently dissension and anarchy in that country had begun again, and now continued without cessation for six years—six years of the highest importance. Unfortunately, too, Lord Elgin, the Governor-General, now died suddenly after a very brief rule, and was succeeded after an interval of a month or so by Lord Lawrence.

Further, it was becoming obvious that, although some of the old kingly characters of the frontier, such as Herbert Edwardes, might still be there, the former vigorous, masterful style of personal rule by the local officers was being "toned down," so to speak, and the political guidance of the borders and the border tribes was being shifted from these local border officers to the official centre of the Punjab Government at Lahore itself, of which more presently.

At the same time, this period of his career was probably the one in which Browne enjoyed life more thoroughly than in any other. He was prospering, in much favour both with his comrades and with the natives, with whom his exceptional social relations have been already described. He was a welcome guest wherever he had to stop, and brimful of fun. He was in splendid health and vigour, and full of the most buoyant and joyous spirits; and when he and his special friend and brother officer, Henry Blair, foregathered, they were quite irrepressible. A story is told of them at Bunnoo, where on one of the hottest

nights in the year, sleep being hopeless, the three chums on the roof of the house improvised a concert with a banjo and tum-tum (or drum), Browne taking in falsetto the part of the Nautch girl, as he had a very musical and correct ear. However much scandalised by the false ideas that were at first formed, even the most prim and censorious of their neighbours were much amused and entertained by the actual facts when they transpired.

While going along the frontier, he used to be somewhat rash, from exuberance of spirits, and from sympathy with the tribes, in crossing over the frontier in despite of rules, and seeing and learning for himself the ways of the people. He was regarded and treated quite differently from all others—as a really free lance. He learnt much that was strange to other Englishmen from these adventurous habits, in which, however, there was shrewdness and method, in spite of the apparent rashness.

All this, it may be observed, occurred southwards from Attock. Hazara was, it seems, the only district north of the Lahore and Peshawur line to which he had penetrated up to this time.

One of these adventures is worth recording more fully. He was going through the bazaar one day, when he saw an old Afghan, carrying some skins for sale, who was being maltreated by the natives. He had been beaten and stoned, and had received several wounds.

Browne, who always carried a stick, went to his rescue, drove off his assailants, took him home with him to his bungalow, fed him, and kept him until his wounds were healed and he had done his business of selling skins. The old man was deeply grateful, and said to him: "Sahib, you have saved

my life, and I have eaten your salt. I should like to show I am grateful. Will you when you get leave come and pay me a long visit?" He then gave him a jewel, to be used as a talisman or amulet, and said, "Take care of this, show it at the frontier—it will serve as a safe conduct, and you will be cared for as if you were my son."

This Afghan's tribe occupied a territory in Afghanistan where no Englishman had ever been, and at that time officers could get no permission from Government to visit such countries, lest complications should arise if any harm happened to them.

Browne therefore decided not to seek the Government's permission, but having secured three months' leave, he started for the border, armed with his amulet and gun. He slipped past the English sentries late at night, for fear of being stopped, and once across the border, when he mentioned the Afghan's name and showed his amulet, he was treated with the greatest courtesy. Ten men accompanied him, and after four days' journey he reached the village, of which, as it turned out, the old fellow was *mullick*, or headman. He was received with open arms; and during his stay of three months he acquired the language and also a great deal of the knowledge of the border tribes for which he was so remarkable later on in his life. The old chieftain used to say to him, "The Afghan nation is like the horse with ears turned in two directions, one ear for England, the other ear for Russia—fearful of both countries and listening to their every movement."

CHAPTER V

THE FRONTIER. UMBEYLA CAMPAIGN: 1863

CHANGE IN THE FRONTIER ADMINISTRATION—RISE OF FANATICISM UNDER PATNA PROPAGANDISTS—PREPARATIONS AGAINST THE SITANA FANATICS—THE UMBEYLA CAMPAIGN—THE BRITISH POSITION—BRITISH ATTACK AND VICTORY.

BETWEEN the date of Browne's joining the Mahsood Wuzeeree expedition at Dera Ishmael Khan and the close of his charge of the frontier division of Public Works—*i.e.* between 1860 and 1863—a very great and serious, if not actually fundamental, change had been gradually getting introduced into the civil and political management of the Punjab frontier. This change lay in the substitution of rule by regulations and courts with the intervention of pleaders and petty officials, and the consequent spread of bribery and corruption and oppression, in place of the original system introduced by Sir Henry Lawrence and his exceptional staff (Mackeson, Edwardes, Nicholson, Abbott, Bechor, and the like), the system of personal intercourse, and open-air courts—the village Peepul-tree justice as it used to be called. The result now in progress was to drive out our well-wishers across the borders into foreign ground, where they had then, from their inferiority in numbers and want of standing, to do as others did, and to join in

and commit themselves to the local intrigues and hostilities against the British.

Such, briefly, was the essence of the radical change that was being introduced from about 1860 into the administration of the Punjab frontier. At first that administration had been placed in the hands of soldiers chiefly, and had been carried on for eleven years with the greatest success, as was specially clear after the Punjab had been settled, the Mutiny crushed, and the frontier management and its good results had developed. The system that was introduced at the first for the administration of the province and for the selection of the officers can be best learnt and grasped by a perusal of such books as the Lives of Sir Henry Lawrence, Sir John Lawrence, and Sir Herbert Edwardes, and *Men and Events of my Time in India*, by Sir Richard Temple.

It will suffice, at present, to restrict our remarks to a group of officers in one small sphere alone, on the northern frontier, who had made that frontier famous and given it a repute which is ever green. The names, so well known there, in those first days—Mackeson, Chamberlain, Lumsden, Sidney Cotton, Edwardes, John Nicholson, Abbott, James, Taylor, and others—were still just as fresh as if they were present on the spot, and equally revered, though years had elapsed since some of them had passed away.

First of all, Mackeson, who during the first Afghan war, while our own frontier was at Ludhiana and Ferozpoor on the Sutlej, and the great Sikh power was still holding the Punjab the whole way up to Peshawur, managed, with the support of Sir Henry Lawrence at his side, to control the tribes of the Khyber while all was chaos in Afghanistan.

No name was more revered and respected than his; no reputation on the frontier is equal to that which he secured; and his name and deeds have remained as fresh in the memory of the Khyber tribes as if he were still present and alive amongst them.

Lord Dalhousie's orders explain truly and simply what the man was, and they are worth repeating here. "The reputation of Lieutenant-Colonel Mackeson as a soldier is known to and honoured by all. His value as a political servant of the State is known to none better than to the Governor-General himself, who in a difficult and eventful time had cause to mark his great ability, and the admirable prudence, discretion, and temper, which added tenfold value to the high soldierly qualities of his public character." "The loss of Colonel Mackeson's life would have dimmed a victory. To lose him thus by the hand of a foul assassin [a Gazee fanatic] is a misfortune of the heaviest gloom for the Government which counted him among its bravest and best."

To turn next, say, to John Nicholson, Lord Lawrence thus spoke of him: "I think of him as one without whom perhaps not even Englishmen would have ever taken Delhi. I can hardly say more, but this I will say, that as long as an Englishman survives in India, the name of John Nicholson will never be forgotten." In saying those few words, he spoke with intense earnestness and feeling—in fact, with deep emotion; for they had not always been on the best of terms.

Not far behind these two, either in character, bravery, or devotion to the service, were others who have been mentioned with them. Think of Abbott holding Hazara in check at one of the stormiest periods of Punjab history solely by his personal

influence and unaided. Think of Edwardes' career from Mooltan and Bunnoo to Peshawur, the virtual framer of the treaty with Dost Mahomed, the author of the Afreedee army in the Mutiny. Think of George Lawrence at Peshawur at another stormy period—and of Sidney Cotton and Neville Chamberlain and Harry, otherwise Joe, Lumsden, whose names are household words on the frontier. Kaka[1] James too, as he was called at Peshawur, was still there, a man of tried strength, with a reputation second to none, but now beginning to feel himself hampered.

Such were the officers who had been instrumental in making the Punjab frontier what it was in its early, palmy days; and it has been shown, in the beginning of this chapter, what changes had been since creeping in up to the era of 1862.

Except on the trans-frontier, or on the very borders, there had been no ill-feeling, no state except of perfect tranquillity anywhere else in the Punjab; and the high officials of the province had been more taken up, ostensibly, with infanticide and missionary conferences, and the like, than frontier politics, though, as described, the system there was being changed, and men like Herbert Edwardes were glad to leave it for more interior posts, such as Umballa.

But meanwhile a very serious evil had begun to arise in India—a wave of religious fanaticism, not of the wild frontier description, but of deep-seated sectarianism or proselytism, of which the site and origin lay at Patna far away to the south, on the borders between the North-west Provinces and Bengal. It had existed there during the Mutiny and had caused the Dinapore outbreak, but it had, for the time, been overshadowed by the excited feelings of that

[1] Kaka means "Uncle."

It had been since then vigorously at work, and had found a site for mischief just outside the most northern border of British India, and had begun to people it with the defeated Mahomedans of the late Sepoy army. That site was precisely in the close neighbourhood of the Akhoond of Swat and other wild Afghan fanatics already described.

Though well watched, this fanatical centre was now —in 1863—growing into a serious evil, and fresh adherents were being rapidly forwarded by the Patna Propaganda, for the suppression of which the local Government had taken no adequate steps; and other evils were beginning to prevail. It was known that Russia was on the war-path—far off, however, at present, in the Kirghiz country—and though somewhat ostentatiously holding aloof from Afghanistan borders, was really vigorously at work there, fomenting the fratricidal war which had immediately followed on the death of the old Ameer Dost Mahomed, and was also filling India with emissaries to create excitement and keep the people in a ferment.

The action and attitude of the Wahabee fanatics at Sitana near the Akhoond's domicile, as above described, were now becoming serious and attracting attention. They had taken part in one of the border raids four years before, and their present attitude seemed to make it necessary to adopt strong measures and to attack and destroy their colony.

It was not till later years that Browne was so much interested in the political questions. At present he was more boyishly excited at the prospects of warfare and combat. Still the matters that were then stirring the surface of the waters covered a very wide range. They were not merely local matters; there was much more to be dealt with—much more

at issue than usual and much that needed both judicious and vigorous treatment. Unfortunately the treatment does not seem to have been either judicious or vigorous.

As a matter of course, the agitation—if not actual scare—that now existed or arose very quickly was widely ascribed to Russian intrigues, but on only slight foundation. It is certain that at this period—towards the end of 1863—no *overt* hostile action had yet been shown on the part of Russia. Her troops in Asia were engaged in the *northern* Kirghiz tracts; and there were no prominent emissaries of rank or weight hovering in the neighbourhood of Afghanistan. But there were suspicious characters and secret intriguers abroad all along the northern frontier and scattered through the plains of the Punjab, spreading rumours of the approach and of the hidden presence, in disguise, of Russian soldiery. As Sir Herbert Edwardes described them, "These fellows, in such times as the present, are just *showing* themselves sufficiently, like snakes putting their heads out of their holes in the rains, so as to keep up alarm and agitation." As an instance of the result, not far from Umballa where Sir Herbert then was, a large village was suddenly, during the night, scared and emptied by the vague rumour of an impending raid by a party of Russian troops! In some of the chief cities of the Punjab tales were rife of a Sikh rising, and some of the missionaries were warned against an "imminent massacre."

These remarks will show that the expedition against the fanatic settlement at Sitana was causing an agitation the virulence of which must have been largely due to many other and wholly extraneous causes quite outside anything connected with the Punjab. In fact,

there can be little doubt that Russian intrigue was at the bottom of it. At any rate not only now, but throughout the whole of Browne's career the principal public subject ever pressing on his mind and attention was the attitude and designs of Russia against India. From the days of the blunder of the Crimean war Russia had accepted the challenge which it seemed to imply, not for that one contest only, but for a permanent struggle in the East; and Browne had from time to time a broad and vivid recognition of this fact forced on him.

What with the insidious movements of Russia, the state of the frontier and the measures now impending, the late Governor-General, Lord Elgin, had evidently thought it advisable to be near the seat of operations against Sitana—and he had left Simla shortly before for a tour along the Lower Himalayas towards Kooloo and the neighbouring hills where he would be within reach of the passes near the Indus. Most unfortunately, however, he was not in vigorous health, and hence, as he was essaying to traverse one of the pliant rope bridges peculiar to those mountains, his heart got seriously affected, leading to a fatal issue. This catastrophe, with all the other circumstances of the frontier troubles, made the state of public affairs a very anxious one, if not actually critical. Temporary arrangements had to be made forthwith, and the ferment was such that John Lawrence was sent out in hot haste as the new Viceroy—a departure from the old practice, that the Viceroy must be a peer, but held to be indispensable in view of the crisis.

Meanwhile Browne, as executive Engineer in the Peshawur districts, had been busy preparing the professional arrangements and requirements for the expedition—such as its field and Engineer park—

and collecting them all at the starting-point, Nowakilla, a short distance from Peshawur, frontier-wards. He was directly attached to Colonel Taylor as field Engineer, and in charge of the Engineer park, as well as interpreter to the expeditionary force, which was under the command of Sir Neville Chamberlain as in the Wuzeeree business.

An obligatory portion of the route to be traversed by the force was the Umbeyla Pass—Sitana could not be reached otherwise from the Peshawur direction. But the whole operation was to be at first a profound secret. Hence it was essential to divert attention from any thought of using the Umbeyla Pass. The detachments from Peshawur, then, began to assemble at Nowakilla, and the first party to advance thence moved in accordance with the above plan, not towards the Pass, but to the village of Durrum, quite off that route. But the next day, both a second party from Nowakilla and the first party at Durrum marched towards the mouth of the Umbeyla Pass, and there peacefully halted for the night of October 19th.

Next day, on the morning of October 20th, the west end of the Pass was entered, and the Umbeyla campaign began. It was under the military command of Sir Neville Chamberlain and the political guidance of Colonel Reynell Taylor, who had already sent to the Bonairwals and to Chumla the formal official proclamation of the intention of the British carefully to avoid molesting the tribes in any way and to proceed against the Sitana Hindoostanees only. There had been some slight desultory sniping while the force advanced to the *east* end of the Pass, where it camped, but no damage had occurred, and all was quiet at night both about the camp and also

at the entrance of the west end of the Pass. Colonel Alexander Taylor, of Delhi fame, was chief Engineer of the force, and his assistants—all of them subalterns —were Blair, Browne, and Carter.

The Umbeyla campaign, then, was opened by our unexpected and deceptive entry into the Umbeyla Pass (which lay immediately beyond our own proper frontier) in order to find our way eastwards through it, and then through the Chumla country to the Mahabun Mountain on the Indus, where the Hindoostanee fanatical settlement at Sitana was to be attacked and destroyed.

The clan that dominated the Umbeyla Pass and the plain beyond it were called the Bonairwals, whose chief location was the village of Bonair, situated just outside the Pass itself at the eastern end of the northern slopes of the Guroo Hill, a mountain which formed the northern side or ridge of the Pass. The valley, as it may be called, of the Pass, once it became a Pass at its west end, sloped up nearly straight eastwards, gently, but along very rough and impracticable ground for about eight miles, till it reached its eastern end, when the route, debouching suddenly down steep but open ground into the more level Chumla country, led away, in a north-easterly direction, to the Sitana site.

The Pass was entered, as has been described, and so the war began—technically—on the morning of October 20th. By the evening the bulk of the force, including the guns, had reached the high or eastern end of the Pass, whence the exit descended suddenly and steeply into the Chumla Plain beyond, as above described.

The site of the camp at the east was on suitable ground on the narrow levels between the two hill

slopes forming the valley or pass where the ground, first gradually, then sharply, sloped up right and left into the northern and southern ranges or ridges which were on the two flanks of the position. Its front was to the east, where the advance would lie, and its rear to the west, whence the rear-guard and baggage had still to come up. Browne was first sent back to help it up and remove difficulties. He found the entrance to the Pass obstructed by a couple of rocks which had fallen inwards from the opposite sides or slopes. Instead of removing the obstructions, he filled up the ends of the narrow channel so formed, and then built ramps from each side to the top of the rocks and so passed all the traffic over it.

It had been hoped that the political arrangements would prevent any serious opposition or molestation to the force on its way through and beyond the Pass; and the secrecy with which the movement was carried out did, as a fact, minimise all difficulties for two or three days. But, though the tribes were not at once seriously alarmed, the *Hindoostanee settlement*, which had been all along wide awake and on the alert, had roused the fanatical or professional religious leaders of the tribes, the Akhoond, the Moolvee, and others in their own neighbourhood; and a *jehad* or religious war had been forthwith proclaimed.

The result, which will now be dealt with, was one of the most singular, persistent, and stubborn conflicts ever thoroughly fought out to a finish, and was filled daily with brilliant and exciting incidents; so as to represent a romantic and stirring tale of a prolonged contest instead of only that of a short couple of months. This impending result did not become apparent till the following evening, October 22nd.

After the halt on October 21st to bring up the

baggage and pull the force together, and while nothing serious was going on, a reconnaissance in force, eastwards, was made on the 22nd under Colonel Taylor, the chief Engineer, whom Browne accompanied. He examined the country for some ten miles eastwards, keeping clear and to the south of the villages that were to be let alone, and returning in the evening; by which time an adequate knowledge of particulars and of the lie of the country had been obtained. The Bonair town lay on the north side of the Guroo Hill, but east of it; Umbeyla lay some miles farther beyond to the east; other villages still farther to the south-east, and so on. And now, on returning, Taylor found the Bonair people, who had been announced as friendly, advancing southward, from their town on the north, towards the foot of the Pass as if to intercept him. A skirmish ensued: Taylor drove off the Bonairwals and duly reached the camp, but the Bonair people closed in behind the party, and kept up a fight all night with it. That party and post afterwards formed the advanced picket of the position. There Browne remained all night—joining in the scrimmage and meeting with some adventures.

His special function as an Engineer was to strengthen this position and assist the defence of the picket; hence he was all night engaged on its outskirts, and this brought him twice into conflict with isolated Bonairwals creeping forward into the position. The first of them he had marked down at a spot whence he had been keeping up an unpleasant fire; and pouncing on him at last, he cut him down and stopped his doing any further mischief. Then, later on, he came unwittingly on an ambushed foe and was himself suddenly and vigorously attacked. The combat that issued was typical—nay, Homeric. The

Bonair's tulwar was of superb steel, a splendid weapon. It shattered Browne's sword at the hilt; but with that hilt Browne felled his foe to the ground, receiving, however, a slash on the arm at the same time. A struggle ensued. Browne, hammering the enemy, mastered him in spite of his wound, and seizing the tulwar, slew him with it, and ever held it as the choicest in his collection of trophies. He was thenceforward a special hero in the eyes of the 20th Punjab Infantry who formed the picket and witnessed the combat.

It had been hoped by the political officers that there would be no opposition at all on the part of the tribes; but this fond idea had been ruthlessly swept away, and the hostility which had been roused in them outstripped immeasurably the force of any opposition that could be met with only from those to whom we had expected the contest against us would be restricted.

Hence this episode of October 22nd, with the obvious combination against us of the three parties—the Hindoostanees, the Akhoond fanatics, and the local tribes—altered the whole aspect of the case, of the outlook, and of the policy and line of action to be adopted. The enemy, already in obviously superior strength, were increasing in numbers. An immediate attack on them was out of the question. All that was possible was to retain and strengthen the position held in the Pass, await reinforcements, and defer further aggressive action till the enemy should have felt our strength. Steps were therefore forthwith taken to send back all encumbrances, and make the camp and its defences as compact and strong as possible, and also to press for an increase to the reinforcements that had been already arranged for.

The site of the British position included a collection of rocky peaks and the like, which, if turned into breastworks and held by us, would greatly strengthen it, but if occupied by the enemy would make it insecure, if not untenable. There were on the north slope the Eagle's Nest and some minor posts, on the south slope the Crag Picket, the Conical Hill, and others. The camp lay south of the Eagle's Nest and north-west of the Crag Picket and the Conical Hill.

It was known forthwith that the Hindoostanees and at least three large tribes were advancing against the British position, and the next day, the 25th, they attacked the right pickets, but were repulsed, while the tribesmen on the left, on the Guroo Hill, did not attack, because the Bonair clan held somewhat aloof, Next day, however, the Eagle's Nest, the peak on the left, was attacked in force, as well as another near it; but both were gallantly held, the enemy was driven off, and the Engineers so strengthened these posts that it was decided to occupy them permanently.

By October 30th, besides the Sitana men, the tribes that had collected were in great force, such as the Hussunzyes, the Chuggurzyes, the Muddar Kheyls. the Bonairs, the Salurzyes, the Dowlazyes, and the Gadarzyes. The Swatees, too, were gathering and advancing (some 3,000) and the Bajourees from greater distances; the Mullazyes also under the Rajah of Dir, and so on. It was clear that there was a general combination of all the tribes between the Indus and Cabul. Old animosities were being held in abeyance, and, under the influence of the fanaticism, tribes that were usually at feud with each other were hastening in concert to join the Akhoond and fight for "the Faith." Further, the Akhoond had heretofore been opposed to the Sitana Moolvee as being the repre-

sentative of a heretical sect; but now these two were united in a common cause.

On October 30th the enemy advanced in force and attacked both the right and the front of the camp, but were repulsed without difficulty, leaving some forty dead on the ground. The Crag Picket, too, had first been rushed by the enemy, and then immediately retaken by Keyes.

By November 7th—*i.e.* in a fortnight after the formation of a definite position at this camp had been decided on—the arrangement that had been planned for it was carried out. It had become evident that the Umbeyla Defile could not be long depended on as the line of communication with the rear. Hence a new route to the rear had been devised and constructed by the south instead of the west. This was to Permuli, running by the villages of Khanpore and Sherdurra and over the heights on the right or south flank of the position.

The surveying and reconnoitring for these routes, the defending and strengthening of the several posts, rushing to the help of the pickets when attacked, and the multifarious Engineer duties, kept Browne and his brother officers hard at work day and night. And now, on the completion of this new line of communication to the rear, they had another difficult task to carry out—the withdrawal from the whole of the northern position (*i.e.* about the Eagle's Nest, and all that northern slope which they had been holding up till now), and the concentration instead on the positions on the southern slope about the Crag Picket, the Water Picket, and the Conical Hill.

By November 14th this withdrawal from the northern slopes had been carried out as proposed,



UMBEYLA PASS.

BRITISH POSITION.

[*To face p.* 78.

and the whole force was concentrated at the southern position. But the Bajourees and other great accessions to the enemy had now arrived; and so they proceeded to attack the Crag Picket in force. At first they succeeded in driving the defenders out of it, fighting hard and suffering severely; but the tables were speedily turned. The 101st Fusiliers in the camp turned out and formed up at once, doubled the whole way up the hillside without a halt, charged over the defences into the picket ground, and hurled the tribesmen over the opposite side of the position down the precipice. Those who were there and witnessed the sight said it was one that could never fade out of vision—not merely the actual impact of the Fusiliers on the clansmen, but the even unchecked race of the whole battalion, in formation, up the steep hill at a good stiff pace!

The serious feature of the Crag Picket was that owing to its steepness there were no means of seeing the movements of the enemy immediately on its far side, during their approach to its summit, and so forth. Hence they could collect close under the stockade unseen, and then at their own time and signal dash over *en masse* in two or three seconds. The only deterrent was the use of what was called "Umbeyla Pegs"—*i.e.* soda-water bottles filled with gunpowder or explosives, and fitted with short time fuses, forming practically extemporised grenades.

There was heavy fighting again on November 20th, and the Crag Picket was the scene of attack and capture and recapture for the third time; and though contests continued and there was no intermission in the daily ceaseless sniping and skirmishing, no attack so serious as heretofore seems to have been again attempted after the 20th. This was an important stage in the struggle.

General Chamberlain was wounded on this day, and had to resign the command to General Garvock. And now signs were apparent of the early ending of the struggle. Reinforcements, on the one hand, were rapidly arriving; and, in spite of the heavy losses, there was soon an effective force present of nearly 8,000 men. Major James, too, the political officer of the frontier, had returned from England and was on the spot, and had at once begun to influence not the fanatics, but the tribes, who were now seeing that they had been entirely misled when cajoled into supposing that we had ever intended to meddle with them.

About November 25th, then, General Garvock took over the command at Umbeyla from Sir Neville, but he did not start from the position which they had been holding, and move to attack the enemy's posts and finish the contest, till December 14th. These operations will be shortly described.

But a few words may first be said of the general aspect of the camp and its life during the seven or eight weeks it had been held. The fighting had been daily, and ceaseless. There was no day on which there was not some sort of an attack on some post or other. The Engineers were at work day and night, but there was no intermission in their jollity and the liveliness that spread round from their tents. They were present at every bit of fighting, and they were noted for their ceaseless part in hand-to-hand struggles. Chamberlain—so noted himself in his younger days for personal gallantry and swordsmanship—dubbed them "Gladiators" and threatened Blair and Browne with arrest; their mirth too in the night watches occasionally called down his remonstrances, however valuable the tone

that resulted. Occasionally Browne's knowledge and power of imitation of the tribesmen's songs and cries used to come into play and add an unexpected feature to the humour of the scene.

Besides taking his full share of the general Engineer duties, Browne had to undertake others which were special or exceptional—such as the charge of the Engineer park and stores—and the functions of *Interpreter* in all cases of documentary or verbal communications with the enemy, as he was the only officer who was qualified for the task.

At length, on December 15th, Garvock began his attack. Leaving a reserve of some 3,000 men in the camp, he advanced against the enemy with about 5,000 men and 13 guns, and attacked and carried first the fortified positions of Lalloo and other points near it, then the spurs leading up from the valleys. Eventually he completely routed the whole of the hostile gathering who had been holding that ground. This was his first operation.

Next day the force descended into the valley, and finding that the defeated enemy thought of defending the approach to Chumla, he advanced against it and drove the enemy thence towards the Bonair Pass and continued to encircle them, the Bonairwals themselves holding absolutely aloof.

The cavalry then intercepted the retreat of the whole of the hostile array and hemmed them in, on which the Ghazees (*i.e.* fanatics under a death vow) made a blind rush *en masse* at the British line opposite them, which consisted of the 23rd and 32nd Pioneers. General Turner, who commanded them, met the attack scientifically, strengthening the point attacked, and throwing forward the outer companies of the regiments so as to flank it. The

fanatics, like the French Guard at the last charge at Waterloo, never gained ground; they were simply swept away by the rifle fire from front and flank and annihilated—not a man escaped! On this effective stroke, the rest of the enemy broke, scattered, and fled precipitately. The fighting of the campaign was over. In this action Browne was severely wounded and was warmly praised and thanked by General Turner.

After this the Bonairs and others, under the guidance of the British politicals, proceeded to Sitana, and burnt down and destroyed the fanatic settlement there; and thus was the object of the campaign accomplished. The difficulty and delay of the campaign were due to its having been started on the supposition that we should have to deal with merely a small band of fanatics supported by a few special sympathisers, and that our word, that we did not mean to interfere with the tribes, would be trusted.

Browne was present at every day's fighting and was prominent in the final action, as well as throughout. He and his friend Blair were being constantly engaged in the hand-to-hand close fighting. He had numerous narrow escapes. On one occasion a bullet tore away the side of his cap or helmet, and grazed his head. He was twice severely wounded, and was three times mentioned in the dispatches. Sir Hugh Rose's verdict was that his service had been of a most distinguished character; and he was registered for a brevet majority, on attaining the regimental captaincy, which was not to be till seven years later.

On this termination of the campaign, the troops were withdrawn, and Browne and his party were back, on Christmas Day, at Nowakilla, the point from

which they had started, on the north of Peshawur. This campaign assured Browne of the same high status as a military engineer and officer which his work on the Frontier Public Works had secured for him as a civil engineer; and he was now free, as regards prospects, to take such rest and leave to England as might suit him.

CHAPTER VI

LORD LAWRENCE'S VICEROYALTY: 1864–9

BROWNE AND THE FRONTIER SYSTEM—THE TWO POLICIES: THE "FORWARD POLICY" AND "MASTERLY INACTIVITY"—HOW THE MULLAH EPISODE BEGAN—FURLOUGH, MARRIAGE, AND THE ROORKEE APPOINTMENT—LAHORE—THE KANGRA VALLEY.

WHEN Browne returned to Nowakilla John Lawrence's return to India on his assumption of the viceroyalty was the event of the day; and it was followed quickly by the emphatic exposition of the frontier policy that was to come into force: "Laissez faire" as known to the dissentients—"Masterly inactivity" as called by its supporters—a deep-seated question of which the merits and issues were not to be seen for some years, during which however there was persistent movement.

Up till now, Browne's sole experience of India had lain on the Punjab frontier; but, much as he was taken with its native community, with the work, and with his comrades, there is little doubt that he was not at all satisfied with the changes that were beginning to appear in the local outlook, and he applied for short leave to England during the hot weather, and arranged that, at its close, he should not necessarily revert to the frontier, but be free for other employment and duties.

One probable reason for this was that, with his strong tendency to look ahead, he realised that his future tasks would be likely to involve more varied engineering, for the study of which he would not have time during his coming short-leave, and for which he would like to be able to make other arrangements.

His papers show that the altered system of frontier management that was now being introduced in the Punjab was not at all to his liking, a matter which will be dealt with later on; and he also felt strongly the weakness and blunders of the policy and management of the recent campaign both in the diplomatic and the resulting military aspect; while, as far as he could foresee, the undesirable system seemed likely to be continued. By the military aspect is meant, it must be explained, the guidance that lay not with the generals, but with the political authorities as to the effective action and measures against the enemy. That experienced and able frontier commander, Sir Harry Lumsden, wrote to this effect: "It is reported that Captain James, Commissioner of Peshawur, is exercising his influence to induce the hill tribes to give in and come to terms. My opinion is that once we get to blows with natives we should not leave off till the latter give in from a conviction of their helplessness. A treaty made under other circumstances will only prove a source of more trouble hereafter and leave an idea in the native mind that we give in to them from want of ability to go on with the war. Once a shot is fired the politicals should retire into private life till called to the front again by the supplicant chiefs begging to be let off."

There can be no doubt that though the enemy we meant to attack had been destroyed, the object of

the expedition had been gained, and the Akhoond even had wholly collapsed, still the tribes who had joined against us and formed the real difficulty of the war had been in no sense subdued or punished, though they had felt themselves unable to beat us. But, though thus let off, they had felt and understood our strength, and being a manly race, did believe our statements and accept the assurance that we had not had any intention to meddle with them—and the result was that there was peace on that frontier for the next sixteen years; not, however, any subjection to our supremacy as on the plains of India.

Major James, it may be observed, was in bad health, had hurried back from England at once on hearing of the broil; and was, of course, acting under orders. But his career was ended, and he died very shortly afterwards; a great loss, as was universally recognised, to the frontier administration.

Further, Browne's three years' presence on the frontier, with his close and intimate intercourse with the frontier and tribesmen of all classes and ranks, had led to his possessing a very keen and sound knowledge of the trans-frontier movements in progress and of the current action going on both in Afghanistan and beyond. His singular linguistic aptitude, and his quite unique powers over certain classes of tribesmen, made him a mine of exceptional knowledge which was never properly tapped by the authorities, with their habitual narrow prejudices, though it served as a most valuable guide to himself in steering his course, especially when he reverted some years later on—almost finally it may be said—to the north-west frontier of India.

These remarks apply not merely to the dealings with the Afghans and our attitude towards them, but

to the "Masterly Inactivity Policy" definitely and authoritatively announced at that very time by the Viceroy as the treatment and attitude to be maintained in India in respect of the movements of Russia.

This emphatic exposition had been brought about in a manner that verged on the ludicrous, almost at once becoming common property.[1] Before it was known, in consequence of the suddenness of Lord Elgin's death, who his successor would be, Sir Bartle Frere, the champion of the "Forward Policy," had addressed a letter to the new Viceroy (whoever he might be) to meet him at one of the ports on his voyage out, pressing that policy on him; little dreaming, of course, that its recipient would be the very champion of the opposition or "Masterly Inactivity Policy"—Sir John Lawrence himself. But so it was!

The difference between the two schools, which must be explained, is excellently stated in the following passage, cited from Wyllie's *Essays on the External Policy of India.*

"AFGHANISTAN AND RUSSIA

"In 1865 it was held to be quite possible that in a very short time the Russians would have military colonies on the Oxus at Charjui and at Takhtapul. From Charjui troops might be thrown across the desert to Merv, and from Merv the fertile banks of the Murgab offered easy access to Herat. Simultaneously a smaller column might proceed through Takhtapul and the defiles of the Hindu Khush to occupy Kabul. Persia, of course, would act in alliance with the invaders, and at Herat the force from Charjui might be joined by large Russo-Persian reinforcements marching in from the shores of the Caspian Sea and the districts of Khorasan. Some delay would occur at Herat, for that city, as the key of the position, would have to be fortified and

[1] *Vide* Wyllie's *Essays*, page 87.

provisioned, and a chain of smaller forts on either side would have to be established, stretching as far as Takhtapul in the north and Lake Seistan in the south. But the interval would be well redeemed by disarming the hostility and securing the co-operation of the Afghans. The darling dream of that whole nation is to plunder India, and Russia would offer them that guerdon, and the restoration of their old provinces of Peshawur and Kashmir to boot. Then some fine morning in early spring—unless timely measures of prevention were adopted on a scale far above the capacity of the Indian Government to comprehend or its courage to undertake—forty thousand disciplined troops of Russia and Persia, in conjunction with a countless horde of wild Afghan auxiliaries, could be launched, resistless as an avalanche, upon the doomed plains of the southern El Dorado; and there at once is the end of the English Empire of India.

"Language like this was at this period, 1865, by no means uncommon in India; and the practical remedies recommended extended to an immediate re-occupation of all Afghanistan.

"But politicians of another and far higher stamp [*i.e.* of the Bartle-Frere school], while they saw clearly that any immediate or even proximate danger of a Russian invasion was chimerical, nevertheless looked forward with uneasiness to the inevitable day when the Russian and English empires should be conterminous, and the presence of a first-class European state on our border would have power at any time to fan into a flame those elements of sporadic disaffection which of necessity are ever smouldering in any country won and held, as India was and is, by an alien sword. For political reasons of obvious weight, these persons believed that it would be in the last degree dangerous, should war arise, to have India as a battlefield; and on grounds of military strategy they were convinced that sooner or later we ought to occupy certain positions beyond our present frontier as outworks of the empire. Therefore, advancing from Jacobabad, which then was our uttermost station on the Scinde border, they would proceed up the Bolan Pass through Shawl[1] into Afghanistan, and,

[1] Shawl, *i.e.* also Shawl Kote—or Koti—is now familiar to us as Quetta.

leaving Kabul and Ghazni untouched, they would take possession of Kandahar and eventually also of Herat, and establish, at these two points, fortresses of exceeding strength, to be to India what the Quadilateral has been to Venetia, strongholds such as no invader would dream of trying to mask. Further, the long process of a regular siege would, it was argued, be an almost hopeless undertaking in consequence of the natural poverty of the country, the distance of our enemy from their base, and the previous destruction of the crops by the besieged.

"These opinions were held not only by high authorities like Sir Justin Sheil and the late General John Jacob, but also by Sir Henry Rawlinson, who besides his large general experience of war and policy in the East, stood *facile princeps*, as Dr. Vambéry testified, among all who professed a special knowledge of the condition of Central Asia.

"But the majority of the British public appeared to favour a third view of the question. Under the inspiration of a generous optimism, rather than from any discriminate appreciation of the dangers to which the Indian empire is exposed, they scouted Russophobia as an exploded fallacy. In the interests of humanity they rejoiced that a dayspring of Christian civilisation was spreading through the horrible blackness of barbarism in which Central Asia had hitherto been wrapped; and they positively grudged the interval that must yet elapse before India could have a neighbour whose dealings with her would be conducted on the clear principles of European good faith, and whose settled Government would offer new openings for trade. Their vision of the future was that of the Cossack and the Sepoy lying down like lambs together on the banks of the Indus.

"Lord Lawrence, the Governor-General of India, had been steeped too long in the rough practice of actual statesmanship to have much faith in the advent of that political millennium when

> "The common sense of most shall keep a fretful realm in awe,
> And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.

But his opinions with respect to Russia, so far as they can be inferred from his public acts, tended

clearly towards the conclusion which the quietists would advocate—a masterly inactivity."

Broadly speaking, the Forward Policy had originated, or rather had been brought into shape, in 1856, some eight years before the present crisis: in the year before the Mutiny, while Lord Canning and Herbert Edwardes were making with Dost Mahomed the treaties which immediately afterwards proved so all-important; though John Lawrence had received them with strong disfavour, and had agreed to them with extreme reluctance.

The exponents, then, of that policy[1] declared that if the red line of England's boundary was to retain its position on the map, there was absolute necessity for our occupying posts in advance of it.

"A war," they said, "*within* our own territory, with a European army, might be ruinous to our reputation and might entirely undermine our strength, although that strength might have sufficed successfully to meet a world in arms in a field beyond our own boundary.

"There were but two great roads," the argument proceeded to say, "by which an army could invade India from the north-west—viz. the Khyber Pass and the Bolan Pass. Our existing outposts were on the hither or Indian side of both these passes—at Peshawur as regards the Khyber, and at Jacobabad in respect of the Bolan. At Peshawur we might well remain as we were, watching the mouth of the defile; but from Jacobabad we were bound in self-preservation to advance.

"To that end, the first step would be to take advantage of that article in the existing treaty with the Khan of Khelat which permits the cantonment of British troops in any part of his territory, and proceed accordingly to occupy Quetta. Connected with this measure, as its immediate consequences, would come a continuation of the Sind Railway to the

[1] The Bombay school—Jacob, Bartle Frere, Henry Green, and others.

foot of the Bolan Pass, and the construction of a good road through the Pass.

"Next, we should take into our pay a body of Belooch Irregulars, who, politically, would be useful as a link or connection with the native inhabitants, and who, in a military capacity, might be to us what the Cossacks are to the Russian army. Having thus established ourselves in Beloochistan, we should subsidise the Afghans, and pave the way for a peaceable occupation of Herat. With a proper garrison at Quetta, and 20,000 men in the fortress of Herat, we should not only block the Bolan route, but be able to operate with destructive effect on the flanks and rear of any invader attempting to proceed by way of the Khyber; and then India would be as firmly locked in our grasp as if surrounded by the ocean."

These proposals, ever since their original publication, had been the theme of endless controversy in the press, and their general principles had secured the favourable opinion of weighty authorities such as Sir Henry Rawlinson and Sir Justin Sheil. But the more pressing public needs following on the Mutiny, and especially the reorganisation of the whole internal administration of India itself, had thrown the subject, for the time, into the background.

But now that it was resuscitated—and resuscitated moreover by Sir Bartle Frere in the way that has been described—the new Viceroy laid the matter forthwith before the Council.

He explained that he, John Lawrence, had all along known and been familiar with these arguments, that he had never at any time recognised their validity, and that he saw nothing in the present condition of Central Asia to lead him now to a different conclusion. Of the strategic advantages of occupying Quetta there was doubt, while some of its political disadvantages were obvious. The expense would be enormous, and the jealousy would be aroused not

only of the Afghan, but of the Persian court also. Furthermore, it would always be open to us to occupy Quetta and subsidise the Beloochees at any period when the imminence of any real danger to our power might render such a step expedient.

"In the meantime," he concluded by saying, "I am absolutely opposed to this undertaking." Thus spoke the champion of "Masterly Inactivity," who had been just selected to save India in what was supposed to be a second great crisis—a dictator whose judgment none dared to dispute. And all this while Afghanistan was in a state of absolute anarchy—a state so hopeless and helpless that it took five years of strife and rack and misery before the land began to emerge into the glimmerings of more orderly rule.

Now Browne's mind was far in advance of his years, especially in respect of public affairs; and he was quite exceptional, if not singular—and even single—in his breadth and independence of thought. The direction of his bent now seemed very decidedly to be towards a claim to absolute independence in action whenever there was full responsibility imposed by entire absence of specific instructions. This was, of course, coupled with the strict discipline demanded in respect of implicit obedience and genuine compliance and furtherance in the case of clear and positive orders. It is necessary to write this, because he was exceptionally ready to accept responsibility and act on his own judgment, if allowed such freedom—was inclined to oppose any subsequent interference or questioning that might be attempted, and especially resented it as a breach of faith if he had been promised a free hand, or otherwise led to expect exemption from such interference.

Such were the matters that affected Browne's inclination as to the location of the work of his immediate future. He was too junior to carry weight and have influence with the authorities, but he was too thoughtful and too clear-headed not to have strong and decided views for his own guidance.

It was at this period, when Browne was quitting the north-west frontier, that an incident occurred in the Peshawur region which had a very singular and amusing connection with Browne's career, but not till some fifteen years afterwards. This incident is the origin of the appearance of his *double*—and it began thus. An officer, of much the same age, appearance, and build as Browne, retired from the service about this time at Peshawur, and started on an independent and novel career of travel and adventure in Central and Western Asia—a career which will be described from time to time later on; and the likeness between the two led, for a time, and with singular results, to their being regarded as one and the same person. In connection with this episode and before Browne quits the scene of his early labour and life, it may be well to refer again and more fully to his intercourse with the Ghilzyes and other local tribesmen, including of course the gentry and men of family and rank, and their religious leaders. It was with men of *every* class and grade that he came into such close contact, and of whom he obtained such intimate and valuable knowledge. The result was frequently actual friendship amounting to devotedness. Instead of bigoted hostility, he met with kindliness and respect. There was one fine old Mullah whose greeting to Browne always used to be "Huzrut Yeesoo Ka Salamut," which, being interpreted, is "The blessing of the Prophet Jesus be with you." For Browne, though

thoroughly cognisant of the wild fanaticism of some of them, was a hearty admirer of the better sort, and used to say that he knew the hearts of many of them to be nearer the divine light than those of many Christians. As for Browne himself, as he grew in years, so did his early religious spirit and habits grow with him, but always as a matter private and personal and never obtruded on others.

To return now to the actual course of Browne's career, after Umbeyla. At the usual season, towards March, 1864, he applied for and obtained a short furlough, and found his family in their former London residence. His experiences and the character he had now won doubtless secured for him a very exceptional holiday time—anyhow a honeymoon—as he took advantage of the opportunity to secure to himself a bride, the sister of Pierson, his brother officer and comrade. And as this was the bright particular event and feature of the trip, nothing further need be said of its occurrences, which were not otherwise in any way exceptional. As the summer drew to an end, Browne had secured the appointment to a post which would give him the opportunities that he desired for rest, quiet, and study. This was at Roorkee, in the North-west Provinces, the seat of the Engineer College; and presently therefore the young couple left for India, and duly reached Roorkee in the early days of that delightful season—the cold weather—of 1864-5.

When Browne reached Roorkee in the early winter of 1864, he experienced at once a period of great quiet and rest as compared with anything he had ever before enjoyed in India, though he was keen to begin taking advantage of the library and the other professional advantages the college afforded.

And it was gratifying to him to find that his special aptitude and capacity were recognised by his being appointed to the chair of mathematics, and also assistant principal. While here settling to study his profession during the coming summer, it may be remarked that the social atmosphere of India at this time meant, in the upper provinces at any rate, a continuous ovation for John Lawrence. Before the summer set in he had assembled and met all the Punjab and hill chiefs in a great durbar at Lahore, accompanied by something like 60,000 armed clansmen; and this was of course the chief incident of which the impression was felt at Roorkee. But, in fact, Sir John's difficulties had already begun. His flatterers had overshot the mark. The blunder of the Bhootan war had occurred, and he was somewhat at issue with his colleagues. A serious famine also and other causes of friction were to the front.

But, in regard to the Brownes themselves, it was an advantage to the young bride to gain her first experiences of Indian society in a quiet but busy station, exceptionally free from frivolities, and likely to be friendly and helpful, being the headquarters of the Royal Engineers, the seat of the Engineer College, and the site of the capital, as it may be called, of the Great Ganges Canal. It was a pleasant introduction into the family life of the corps to which her husband belonged, before plunging into the rougher tracts and more isolated lines of life in which their future career would most probably be spent. Browne himself, besides enjoying the advantages already alluded to resulting from the college and its library, especially devoted his time to mastering the vexed question of the suitable conditions and the respective merits of the several systems of irrigation

in India. To that work his employment might be at any time directed; but, as it turned out, it was the one line of departmental duty on which he was never engaged.

The several systems of irrigation were not really *rival* systems, as so frequently called; but each of them had a speciality of its own, resulting from local circumstances, permanent and unalterable. Thus in the North-west Provinces and the Punjab the flooding of the Himalayan rivers, caused by the melting of the mountain snows in summer, led to their excess supply on reaching the plains of Northern India, being there scientifically tapped and distributed by subsidiary branches from the main *canals*, chiefly at special seasons, but also so as to ensure a fairly equable supply being maintained throughout the rest of the year. In Madras and Bombay the river floods caused by the heavy rains, in the rainy seasons, were utilised by their surplus water being led off into enormous *tanks* (*i.e.* artificial lakes or reservoirs) and therein stored against the proper time for distribution. And in Scinde and similar desert tracts the passage of the Indus and other great rivers through them led to a system of *surface irrigation channels*, branching off from them right and left at as close intervals as possible, for the benefit of the lands immediately bordering the rivers. This supply, however, is not constant, but mainly autumnal and deltaic.

It may be justly assumed that Browne did not neglect any of the opportunities afforded by Roorkee for effecting his great object of increasing his theoretical knowledge on points on which he had hitherto not had any practical experience. And it turned out before long, after less than a year of this quiet life, that he was to plunge again into a prolonged

practical engineer career, which continued for twenty-two years, coloured occasionally by political work in addition, and twice by campaigning.

From Roorkee he was transferred, towards the autumn of 1865, to Lahore, the capital of his old province (the Punjab). Here, where he had at first a short spell of local duty, the work he carried out was important and valuable, though brief; it was the protection of the city against the erosive operation of the waters of the River Ravee. The stream there had a tendency to work to its left or eastern bank, and this Browne had to counteract; which he did by a series of spurs and training works that guided the current of the river away into mid-channel and thus saved the bank which had been threatened.

He was further employed on buildings and works at other stations lying in the neighbourhood of Lahore, if not belonging to that division, such as Umritsur and Sealkote.

He was then at length posted to the Kangra Division in the near Himalayas, where, it will be seen, he remained for many years. It may be considered certain that he had been all along, while at Roorkee, preparing for this task by study. But now, when working at Lahore, before starting for the Kangra Valley, he was enabled to make all the preliminary practical inquiries needed, and thus prepare properly for the great variety of work he would have to undertake; and also to investigate and consult regarding the economical utilisation of the local labour and materials to which he would be restricted. There the life that had to be led in the midst of the beautiful but wild and grand mountains, on the borders of ordinary civilisation, was a rough one, but free from the anxieties of warfare or the presence of a fierce population.

The principal work now before Browne was that of the Kangra Valley road. The object of the road, which was a purely Punjab scheme, was to open out the range of the Lower Himalayas for frontier commerce generally, and for the local tea planting industry and enterprise in particular. That road followed the general run of the Sewalik Hills, covered or negotiated all otherwise impossible obstacles, and thus increased to a most valuable extent the commercial value and prosperity of the whole region. There was practically no level ground, or stretch of ground that could be made level, along its whole extent of 120 miles. The alignment was nearly as difficult as his later Hurnai Railway Line of 1883-7.

But his main difficulty, or rather the matter in which his ingenuity most markedly came into play, was the selection, in view to *economy*, of the modes of construction and methods of labour, the more so that there was no skilled labour on the spot; the men, though not wild or fierce, were all uncultivated nomads from the interior mountains, and, as elsewhere, besides teaching and training them he turned them into devoted followers.

The prominent facts of the work were: (1) that Browne had to be always encamped, rarely under house shelter, whatever the weather or the temperature, and generally at a distance from any resources; for these were to be found only at the terminus, Dharmsala, or Puthankote, still farther off, to which he could only occasionally take a short run; (2) that the construction of the road occupied three years; (3) that the process by which the road itself was formed was the continuous blasting out of precipitous cliff; (4) that there was a succession of bridges at very short intervals over rivers and torrents; and

(5) that to build these bridges Browne had to use such materials, stone or brick, concrete or timber, as were most conveniently available.

In the construction of the road, the men had to be slung by ropes from the tops of the cliffs till they could get a proper foothold from which to start their drivages inwards at the proper level, whence to carry out their blasts, tunnels, or terraces. Whenever it was known that a big blast was to come off, it was a real holiday for the hill people, who used to gather from all quarters to see the spectacle. On one occasion that he describes "the largest (blast) consisted of six charges of 1,850 pounds, which had to be fired off at the same moment. The great cliff stood up some 200 feet like a wall of stone which nothing in the world could move—and it was very exciting to see the white smoke of the fuses creeping slowly up to the hose which would set off the mines. Then just a slight flash, and the enormous mass of rock seemed to collapse and crumble in a cloud of dust spreading out like a large tree against the sky, and with a rumbling muffled sound, as if the powder had had as much as it could do to lift the mass of rock on its back without wasting its energies in making a noise. Some of the mines again (and those the least successful), when they happened to meet a soft vein in the rock, or when he did not succeed in exactly calculating the proper charge, exploded with a tremendous roar, pouring out a torrent of stones in every direction which was much more imposing than useful and agreeable. But only two out of about thirty behaved in this fashion—and all was completed without any sort of accident to any one employed!

Of the numerous bridges that he had to build there,

there were some that deserve special notice. There were two, at Buneyr and Nigul respectively, made of brickwork, of single spans of 140 feet, the largest ever constructed, by that time, either in India or anywhere else. There was one of concrete, at Daron, with a span of 48 feet, of which an illustration is given. And there was one at Dehra of timber, 214 feet span, the largest in India.

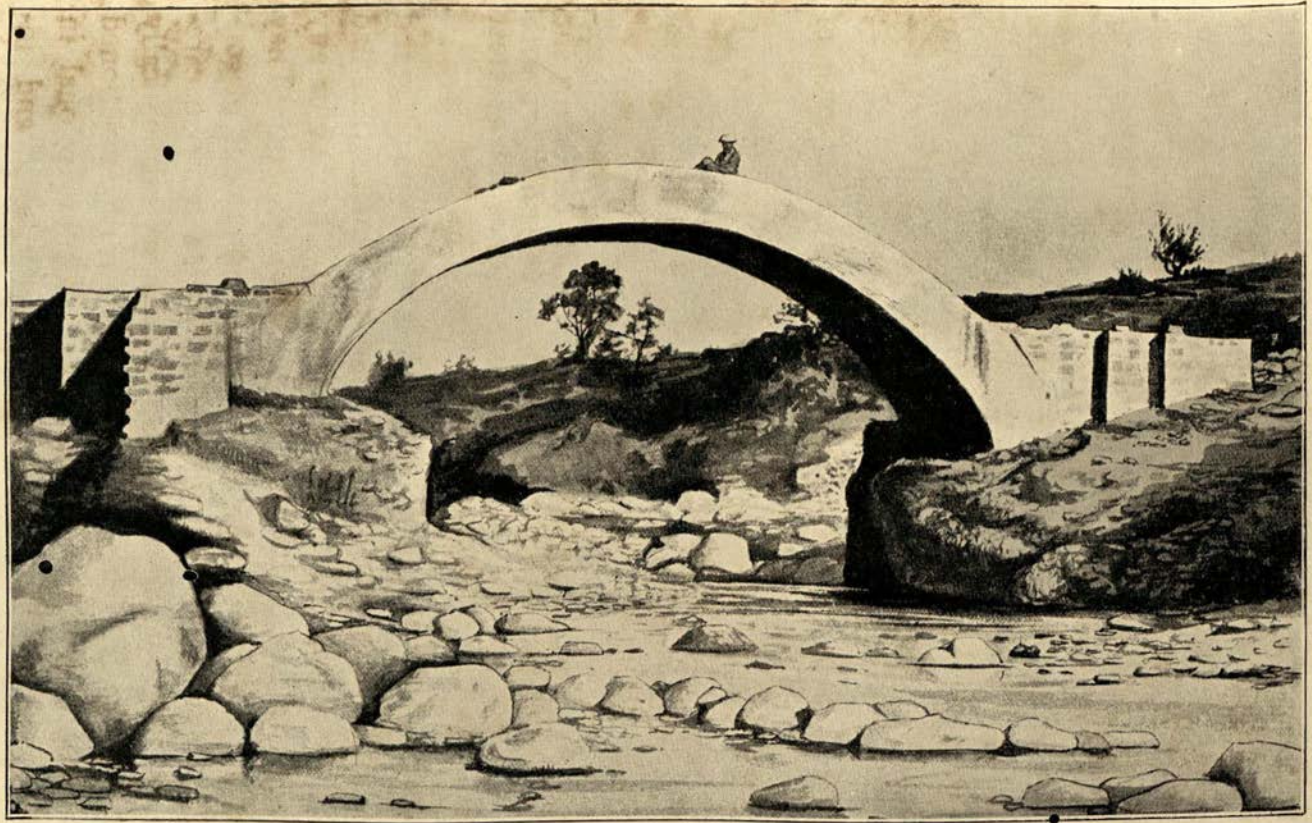
Referring to the Buneyr and Nigul bridges, the Punjab Government thus eulogised them: "They were constructed under very unfavourable circumstances. They were Lieut. Browne's own design—and are worthy of all admiration." And it was ordered that a slab should he inserted in each of them, with the inscription:

"Projected, designed, and erected by Lieut. J. Browne, R.E., Executive Engineer."

The Governor wrote:

"The boldness of design, and the vigorous readiness in overcoming local physical difficulties, in the absence of many usual resources, have combined with careful and accurate execution, which does the greatest credit to Lieut. Browne."

The chief Engineer described them as "grand works," and reported that "careful examination had failed to bring to light any flaw in the arches or any cracks in the spandrils, walls, or parapets. They reflected great credit, and were a monument of constructive skill." Further, the estimates were so carefully prepared, and the work was so economically managed, that the cost was within the sanctioned amount. While these works, being exceptional in size and difficulty, demanded much skill and ingenuity, no less credit attached to the careful selection, with a view to economy, of suitable methods



BROWNE'S CONCRETE ARCH, KANGRA VALLEY.

[*To face p.* 100.

and material—rock, stone, brick, concrete, timber, or whatever was found available on or near the spot, after careful and laborious inquiry. Browne's system was very simple—"to spare himself no work, trouble, or pains."

One of the features of the work on which he was specially complimented was his ingenuity and skill in that ticklish final operation, the removal of the centrings on which the arches had to be supported while being built. They, the centrings, rested on large cases in sections filled tight with sand, which, when the time arrived, was gently run out, under guidance, through holes drilled in the bottoms of the cases; thus allowing the surface to subside slowly until no longer needed as a support.

These works gained for him the highest reputation as an Engineer—and a paper which he afterwards, in 1871, read respecting them at the Civil Engineers' Institute in Westminster gained him the Telford Premium.

It was in this charge that the first serious instance occurred of his exceptional readiness to assume grave responsibility and violate regulations where he held it to be necessary for the duties entrusted to him.

A financial difficulty had arisen, caused by the unexpected withdrawal of funds at a critical time in the construction of some of the bridges, when, as the rains were coming on, the stoppage of work would have resulted in great loss. All entreaties to Government for funds having failed, he, on his own personal security, borrowed from a native of wealth a sum sufficient to carry on the work till out of the reach of danger; repaying the advance later on when he received his new grants. This was done purely in the interests of Government, but it laid him open

to a very severe censure, if not personal loss; and it was not till some years after the event that he let out how he had obtained the money. Thus early in his career he showed his fearlessness of responsibility, provided he felt that he was acting in the interests of Government.

In 1869, when the most important stage of the Kangra work was nearly over, he was much employed in the survey of the road from the plains to the new and neighbouring hill station of Dalhousie, and in preparing and arranging for the buildings needed there—work which he was to take up again after his return in 1873 from the furlough which he was shortly about to take.

It may be observed that the people whom he had to employ—with whom he was brought intimately into contact—in the Kangra Valley and towards Dalhousie differed entirely from all with whom his former experiences lay. They were quiet, peaceable, and kindly hill folk—chiefly Buddhist in religious persuasion—with many hill Rajpoot tribes among them, and sprinklings of Mussulmans from the Lower Himalayas, here quite different from the fiercer fanatics on the Indus. The quiet and peace and security were important on account of his bride and young family, and formed, by contrast, a break and a stepping-stone to the rougher associations of later years.

Meanwhile, too, the career of his "Double" was proceeding, but it will be more convenient to defer dealing with it to a somewhat more advanced stage.

While Browne was thus carrying on his work between 1865 and 1870 on the north-east frontier of the Punjab, outer events in which the fate of India was

involved had not been standing idle. Russia had not as yet been making overt movements or pushing her advances towards our borders, or even towards Afghanistan, but she had been very active in the more northerly districts, and on our part there had been somewhat ostentatious movements towards the Yarkund direction, while our real attention and watch had to be directed towards Kaufmann, the Governor-General of Turkestan.

In Afghanistan Shere Ali had been, by degrees, fighting his way through the large family of rival brothers, and was now, after five years, coming more clearly to the front as the Ameer of the country; though Sir John Lawrence was doggedly adhering to his avowed policy of "Masterly Inactivity." Further, we had ourselves a war on in Abyssinia, in which fortunately our commander was that wise statesman and determined leader, Sir Robert Napier, who, carrying out his own plans, in spite of all opposition and obstacles, won his decisive and thorough victory just in time to anticipate the rains and so avoid a prolonged war. The great flare-up was also beginning in Europe; Prussia had already fought Denmark and was at war with Austria, and France and Prussia were beginning to snarl. Such was the state of matters when Browne obtained his first furlough and went to England.

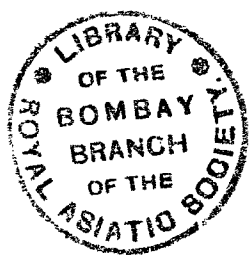
Still these recent years were, it may be assumed, the most quiet, pleasant, and untroubled of Browne's career, spent in a fine climate, under the very appreciative Government of the Punjab, and free from the anxieties of war; the only serious wars that had been going on being on the Continent of Europe and the Abyssinian war. The troubles in Afghanistan in respect of the strife between Dost Mahomed's sons

had now ceased and Shere Ali had become the recognised Ameer of Cabul.

Sir John Lawrence, in pursuance of the policy of recognising and befriending the *de facto* ruler, had deemed it wise that the British Government should acknowledge, in a public manner, the change which had thus taken place. He therefore intimated that he would grant to the Ameer a State interview or durbar, and that he would befriend him, in the consolidation of his power, with a present of money. But Sir John quitted the viceroyalty in January, 1869, and it fell to his successor, Lord Mayo, to carry out these promises. This he did at the Umballa durbar in March, 1869. The effect of that durbar was to give to our policy of a definite basis for our dealings with Afghanistan its legitimate development. So long as the claimants to the Afghan sovereignty were fighting among themselves, that policy debarred us from interfering. But when one of them had finally emerged triumphant, and concentrated the authority in his own hands, the same policy led Lawrence and Mayo to strengthen him in that position. During the first five years after this Umballa durbar events proved that they had accurately gauged the situation. The successful claimant, Shere Ali, whom that durbar publicly recognised, continued to maintain his authority and to reign as the rightful ruler of Afghanistan. This was a happy juncture for Browne to take his well-earned holiday. The public outlook was settled and peaceful, and Browne recognised or foresaw, as few did, that there would soon be a real and vigorous start of *important* Engineer operations, under the direct control of the Government. With the exception of canals, none such had heretofore, to any serious extent, fallen to

the lot of the Government Engineer. And he had now a good opportunity of such further study and inquisition into Engineer work as he might think needful for this new era, as well as of taking a real holiday.

He had now had ten full years of sound practical experience, nearly all of it in Engineer works that were in many respects most valuable for his future career, and a few months of it in rough soldiering that had drawn out and developed his character and capacity in an exceptional manner, as well as giving him the most valuable sort of experience he could have desired.


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CHAPTER VII

LORD MAYO'S VICEROYALTY: 1869–72

LORD MAYO'S RULE—RUSSIAN MOVEMENTS—LORD MAYO'S FRONTIER POLICY—SETTLEMENT OF THE FRONTIER.

IN the last chapter we left Browne closing his work in the north of the Punjab—and, more than this, closing with it his employment in the ordinary work in the Engineer Department of India.

Henceforward, as he had now made his mark as a brilliant practical Engineer and indomitable public servant, and as Lord Mayo had been starting a widespread policy for Public Works, Browne felt that he was certain to be employed in higher-class engineering, and wisely resolved to prepare himself thoroughly for it, and for this object to go on furlough and study the great undertakings of Europe and America.

As a preliminary to Browne's own proceedings to that end, it is expedient to describe first what Lord Mayo had begun to do, premising that, before he made his start, there had been a very scandalous succession of failures in the work of the Engineer Department of the State.

Lord Mayo's rule of India was, as regards its earlier part, contemporaneous with Browne's charge of the Kangra Valley road, and after it, with his

absence on furlough. During the Kangra Valley episode he was so fully absorbed with it, and in such a comparatively isolated locality, that he took less heed than usual of what was going on elsewhere, and during his holiday he had other matters to think of. Hence Lord Mayo's sway in India has been, as yet, but barely alluded to in these pages. But, as a matter of fact, it overflowed with acts and arrangements of the deepest moment, greatly affecting and influencing Browne's subsequent career; and Lord Mayo's measures and proceedings, covering so wide a range as they did and emanating so much from his own personal insight, will be now briefly described.

His first great measure was to start a wide expansion of railways and other works needed for the material development of the country, for the proper treatment of the needs of the British troops, and for the communications and defensive preparations required on the north-west frontier and on the neutral ground between India and Afghanistan.

Next, as his assumption of the viceroyalty had been coincident in time with the settlement of the troubles in Afghanistan and the assumption of its rule by Shere Ali, henceforth the Ameer, he invited him to a durbar to be held in his house and in recognition of his sovereignty. The Viceroy's regal bearing and the heartiness of his demeanour won the Ameer's heart and led to his continuing in the very best relations with England during all Lord Mayo's viceroyalty, in spite of the failure of some of his own aspirations.

It may be here remarked that although Russia had not yet begun to show her teeth, experts who had been watching her knew that her movements in our

direction had begun. She had, ostensibly, been wholly taken up with the northern part of Central Asia, but latterly on trying to move southwards had found the region impracticable, and had consequently now started on another line of advance towards Afghanistan, from the south of the Caspian, through the Turkoman country towards Merv and Herat. Also a new departure, a clear development of its policy and indication of its permanent aims and intentions had been given by the appointment of Kaufmann to the new and high position of Governor-General of Turkestan; though some time was still to elapse before he began to attract serious attention.

Referring back, however, to Shere Ali, it is expedient to show more fully what he had been doing and what Lord Mayo's policy and attitude towards him had been. When Shere Ali had visited India to see the Viceroy, he came with five distinct objects in view. He desired, in the first place, a treaty; next, he hoped for a fixed annual subsidy; and thirdly, for assistance in arms or in men, to be given "not when the British Government might think fit to grant, but when he might think it needful to solicit it"; in the fourth place, for a well-defined engagement, "laying the British Government under an obligation to support the Afghan Government in any emergency; and not only that Government generally, but that Government as vested in himself and his direct descendants, and in no others." Finally he cherished a desire that he might obtain some constructive act of recognition by the British Government in favour of his younger son, Abdulla Jan, whom he brought with him, and whom he wished to make his heir to the exclusion of his elder son, Yakoob Khan, who had helped him to win the throne.

But in not one of these objects was the Ameer successful. The first four were distinctly negatived; the fifth did not enter into the discussions. Lord Mayo adhered to a programme which he had deliberately put in writing before he left Calcutta. Yet, by tact and by conciliatory firmness, he sent the Ameer away satisfied, and deeply impressed with the advantage of being on good terms with the British Power.

Lord Mayo's foreign policy was this: "Surround India," he wrote shortly after the Umballa durbar, "with strong, friendly, and independent states, who will have more interest in keeping well with us than with any other Power, and we are safe." "Our influence," he says in another letter, "has been considerably strengthened, both in our own territories and also in the states of Central Asia, by the Umballa meeting; and if we can only persuade people that our policy really is non-intervention and peace, that England is at this moment the only non-aggressive Power in Asia, we should stand on a pinnacle of power that we have never enjoyed before."

To go farther afield than Afghanistan, Lord Mayo hoped to open conciliatory relations with Russia by honestly explaining the real nature of the change which had taken place. He accepted Russia's splendid vitality in Central Asia as a fact neither to be shirked nor condemned, but as one which, by vigilant firmness, might be rendered harmless to ourselves. But he thought it might be advantageous that an unofficial interchange of views should take place between the high officers connected with the actual administration of Asiatic affairs. He did not, apparently, know—at any rate, he did not accept or act on—Lord Palmerston's view of Russia's ways.

He carried out his views, and in strict accordance with customary Russian diplomacy, appeared to succeed; the result being the formal acceptance of his theory that *the best* security for peace in Central Asia consisted in maintaining the great states on the Indian frontier in a position of effective independence. Unfortunately it was not an adequate security of itself. Efforts were also made to prevent the recurrence of those unauthorised aggressions by Russian frontier officers which had kept Central Asia in perpetual turmoil. Of these efforts it may be briefly said that they were successful, but only for the moment—*i.e.* during the term of Lord Mayo's viceroyalty.

It was now agreed that Russia should respect—as Afghanistan—all the provinces which Shere Ali then held, that the Oxus should be the boundary line of Shere Ali's dominions on the north, and that both England and Russia should do their best to prevent aggressions by the Asiatic states under their control. Lord Mayo lost no time in securing for Shere Ali the guarantee of a recognised boundary against the Ameer's neighbours in Central Asia. In 1871 the Russians, however, raised grave objections to Badakshan being included within the Afghan line. This question was settled by friendly negotiations in 1872. In January, 1873, Count Shouvaloff arrived in London to express personally the Emperor's sanction to the disputed territories being recognised as part of Afghanistan. Subsequent delimitations have given precision to the frontier. But practically it may be said that Afghanistan, as territorially defined by Lord Mayo in 1869, remained substantially the Afghanistan of the following twenty years. But what did that mere fact matter to its rulers, if its real independence

and safety were being all along undermined by insidious aggressions? A formal settlement of that boundary or frontier was made in 1873, the particulars being as follows.

The territories and boundaries which Her Majesty's Government considered as fully belonging to the Ameer of Cabul were stated thus:

"(1) Badakshan, with its dependent district of Wakhan, from the Sir-i-kul (Woods Lake) on the east to the junction of the Kokcha River, with the Oxus (Panjah) forming the northern boundary of this Afghan province throughout its entire extent.

"(2) Afghan Turkestan, comprising the districts of Kunduz Khulm and Balkh, the northern boundary of which would be the line of the Oxus, from the junction of the Kokcha River to the post of the Khoja-Sale inclusive, on the high road from Bokhara to Balkh—nothing to be claimed by the Afghan Ameer on the left bank of the Oxus below Khoja-Sale.

"(3) The internal districts of Akcha, Siripul, Maimana, Shiberghan, and Andkui, the latter of which would be the extreme Afghan frontier possession to the north-west, the desert beyond belonging to independent tribes of Turcomans.

"(4) The Western Afghan frontier between the dependencies of Herat and those of the Persian province of Khorassan is well known, and need not here be defined."

Therefore, on January 31st, 1873, Prince Gortchakoff definitely announced the Czar's acceptance of the northern frontier of Afghanistan, as defined by the British Cabinet, and thereby formally agreed to a limitary line which neither England nor Russia should cross. As this final settlement—so arrived at—constitutes one of the most important agreements between the two Powers concerning Central Asian affairs, and as it is the keystone of the present political situation, the Russian Chancellor's letter is given *in*

extenso. It was addressed to Baron Brunnow, by whom it was communicated to Earl Granville on February 5th, 1873, and was as follows:

"We see with satisfaction that the English Cabinet continues to pursue in those parts the same object as ourselves, that of ensuring to them peace, and, as far as possible, tranquillity.

"The divergence which existed in our views was with regard to the frontiers assigned to the dominions of Shere Ali.

"The English Cabinet includes within them Badakshan and Wakhan, which, according to our views, enjoyed a certain independence. Considering the difficulty experienced in establishing the facts in all their details in those distant parts, considering the greater facilities which the British Government possesses for collecting precise data, and, above all, considering our wish not to give to this question of detail greater importance than is due to it, we do not refuse to accept the line of boundary laid down by England.

"We are the more inclined to this act of courtesy as the English Government engages to use all her influence with Shere Ali in order to induce him to maintain a peaceful attitude, as well as to insist on his giving up all measures of aggression or further conquest. This influence is indisputable. It is based not only on the material and moral ascendency of England, but also on the subsidies for which Shere Ali is indebted to her. Such being the case, we see in this assurance a real guarantee for the maintenance of peace."

But, to turn to another direction, the Russian annexation of Samarkand and the Zarafshan Valley created considerable excitement in England; consequently Lord Clarendon, the British Minister for Foreign Affairs, felt that something had to be done to allay the uneasiness of the British and Indian public. With this object he recommended "the recognition of some territory as neutral between the

possessions of England and Russia, which should be the limit of those possessions, and be scrupulously respected by both the Powers."

Prince Gortchakoff sent an answer to the proposals of the British Foreign Minister, in which, after expressing his satisfaction at the friendly sentiments of the English Government, and after referring with true diplomatic insincerity to the "profound wisdom" of Lord Lawrence's policy of "masterly inactivity," he gave "the positive assurance" that "His Imperial Majesty looks upon Afghanistan as completely outside the sphere within which Russia may be called upon to exercise her influence."

Further, before his death, Lord Mayo had laid the foundation of another great feature in the consolidation of British rule on the frontier, a feature which very shortly came closely under Browne's own ken, the pacification and settlement of the Beloochistan territory. He laid the foundations of this politic measure; but, owing to matters which will be duly noted, it was not effected till later days. But this subject is here mentioned because, though Browne was not cognisant of these or other contemporaneous matters during his furlough, he was very soon to be brought into close contact with them.

These will therefore be more fully dealt with in the special Beloochistan chapter, but the point that may be here specially referred to is the fact of the comparative muddle that had already arisen there owing (1) to the departure of Sir Henry Green, who had ruled that district so long and successfully after it had lost John Jacob; (2) the squabbles and interference with the old Bombay authorities, on the part of Captain Sandeman and the Punjab officials, who, now that the Indus Valley Railway was in pro-

gress, affected to claim a voice in the supervision of the district, and were at issue with Merewether, Jacob's successor, on the Scinde frontier; and (3) the aggressive aims, against the other Belooch chiefs, of the Khan of Khelat, the *primus inter pares* of that community.

CHAPTER VIII

FOREIGN POLITICS AND THE SUKKUR BRIDGE: 1871–6

FURLOUGH: ENGINEER TRAVELS—SUKKUR BRIDGE—THE CANTILEVER SYSTEM—LORD NORTHBROOK'S RULE—RUSSIAN ADVANCE—SUPPRESSION OF SLAVE TRADE—AFGHANISTAN AND RUSSIA.

WITH such a position and outlook in India as has been described, Browne proceeded on furlough while Lord Mayo was Viceroy, and arrived in London early in 1871. His father had died in 1870, the family home was broken up, and he was free to spend much of his time in travel, and he spent it accordingly—and further, in accordance with his tastes and proclivities, in that sort of travel in which he could combine amusement and enjoyment of life with the study of practical engineering, both civil and military. For the Franco-German war was in full swing, and the battlefields and scenes and episodes of the wars which Prussia had been waging with Denmark and Austria were still only a matter of yesterday.

So, after a spell of London and England, he spent most of his first year of furlough in Europe; and then, when his military studies were over, he concentrated his attention on the engineering of Holland and Belgium: its dykes and dams; its warfare against

the action and encroachment of the sea; its reclamations; its protective and regulative works; its mines, factories, and bridges; its machinery and railways. All these specialities, combined with the local interests resulting from his own partially Dutch descent, made this an especially pleasant experience.

This study in Europe was hardly over when the intelligence he received from India led him to recognise that the new activity in the Public Works of India, under Lord Mayo, was not a mere flash in the pan, but the beginning of a genuine and widespread development. So he continued his study of engineering, but transferred it to the even more appropriate field of America. For Lord Mayo had started, as shown in the last chapter, not only a vigorous expansion of work, but at the same time a wisely economical as well as progressive policy; and Browne's inquiry led to the conclusion that in America he would most readily find and be able to study the class of enterprise needed for India.

The railway work carried out in India had as yet been of the stereotyped massive broad gauge style of the Guaranteed Railways; and their engineers, when referred to by Lord Mayo, had refused to depart from it and adopt any lighter style, such as a narrow gauge, or at any smaller cost—*i.e.* anything much under £20,000 a mile; while Lord Mayo aimed at £8,000 to £10,000. He was now consequently organising arrangements for the construction of these railways through the agency of his own Engineer officers. Hence Browne's determination to study the American works on the spot, and to this study he devoted the second year of his furlough.

He was already, to start with, an expert mathematician, both theoretical and practical, and much



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1. SIR NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.
2. SIR HERBERT MACPHERSON.
3. SIR ALEXANDER TAYLOR.
4. COLONEL HENRY BLAIR.
5. COLONEL SIR BUCHANAN SCOTT.

[*To face p.* 116.

given to professional correspondence and controversy on the subject; and in America he studied the local systems thoroughly, working out the calculations for the component parts of the structures, and discussing them with the American engineers and mathematical experts.

The fulness of his study in America may be gathered from the variety of the works and places he visited, such as New York and Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Cincinnati, Louisville, St. Louis, Omaha, Nebraska, Utah, San Francisco, Chicago, Montreal. All this involved hard and tough work and considerable vigour and gymnastic skill; for he was thorough, and went climbing about the girders and structures, and probing into details, so as to acquire direct personal knowledge of them. Browne was specially pleased with the helpful readiness and friendliness he found there, the outcome probably, in a measure at any rate, of the determined good-will and unison betokened by Lord Ripon's far-seeing award in the Alabama case.

On going back from America to England, Browne had to prepare for his return to India, where he would take with him the vast store of professional knowledge and information he had acquired, of which the intelligence had preceded him.

On rejoining in India, he found himself reposted to Dalhousie, which was now constituted a Division, but which had formerly been only a subdivision of his Kangra Valley charge; and he soon realised how work had been expanding in India, of which the accounts he had heard while absent were far short of the reality.

This Dalhousie charge, though he held it for only a brief period, was useful in giving him the needful insight into the present state of public

affairs, before joining in more important operations. To this Division, then, Browne found himself now nominally appointed towards the end of 1873. The word "nominally" is used advisedly, for though, as will be seen, he carried out the duties and furthered the works of the charge as heartily as any man could have done, it was virtually only a temporary post, pending arrangements for the special employment for which he was destined and on which his studies in America could be more specifically utilised.

But even while employed in this Dalhousie Division, he was further assigned some of the special work of designing iron bridges, and that not even for his own Government, the Punjab, but for the North-west Provinces. Among these, of which some had spans of 200 and 300 feet, one was specially notable—a suspension bridge across the Jumna at Khalsi, the largest in India, with a centre span of 260 feet and two others of 140 feet each. He prepared not only the general designs and estimates, but also the working drawings for guidance in the erection. On these designs they were constructed, not by himself, but by the local engineers—and they stood, with complete success, the severe tests to which, in view of the novelty of some of the designs, they are said to have been subjected.

To turn now from these exceptional and additional tasks to his normal duties at Dalhousie. Browne, it will be remembered, was not undertaking a charge to which he was new—as he had designed and estimated the road to it from the plains, and worked there in 1870 and earlier; but since then the station—like other hill stations—had been progressing under the policy and support of Lord Mayo and Lord Napier. Double-storied barracks and cognate buildings were

under construction, and road work was in full swing. One noticeable feature in the arrangements was that much of the work, especially the latter—the road work—was executed by the troops there, of whom some 2,000 were at his disposal. He not only guided and controlled them in the work, but also, with the concurrence and support of their own regimental officers, improvised or aided in the arrangements for their hutting and comforts, their food and their movements. The insight into such matters which he here acquired was of much value to him afterwards in the similar but more arduous case of the Hurnai road. From all the quarters and authorities with whom these duties brought him into contact he received the highest commendation, especially from the military authorities at Lahore, who expressed themselves most warmly as to the speedy construction of the buildings and the management of the troops on the road work.

Besides these works for the troops Browne was assigned the, to him, perfectly novel task of designing and carrying out the water supply. For this the only precedent he could obtain for guidance was that of Calcutta; but it was more a theoretical than a practical precedent, for the circumstances and conditions at Dalhousie were so wholly different. In the one case, there were level plains, a huge river with a permanent supply, and all the machinery and structural appliances that were needed immediately available; in the other there was mountainous ground, and streams varying from almost dry watercourses to rushing torrents, with a head of water of nigh 500 feet, to contend against. Still, with his wonted care and practical bent, he carried out this task with entire success.

But now the time had arrived for the further

special employment on which he was to be engaged. Mr. (now Sir) Guilford Molesworth, the Government Consulting Engineer for Railways, was ready to have the surveys begun for the designing of the railway bridge over the Indus at Sukkur. Browne, being selected for the task, now proceeded to join him at his office at Simla, where he received full instructions, and made all the arrangements needed, including the preliminary surveys, borings, and other investigations.

Besides the point that the site of the bridge was famed in ancient history, the leading fact, for the time, was that railways were already under construction along the banks of the Indus—one on the left bank from the Punjab down to Sukkur, the other on the right bank from Kurrachee up to Sukkur; and this proposed bridge was wanted to connect the two lines properly, as well as for other purposes.

The prominent site for the crossing is at the Island of Bukkur, a rock lying mid-channel between the city of Sukkur on the right bank, and the town of Rohri on the left, and Browne, of course, surveyed this position thoroughly; but, not content with this, he surveyed and explored fully all other possible passages. Then, when he had finished these inquiries completely, so much so as to have formed his own conclusions as to the proper sites for the bridge—or rather bridges—he returned to Simla to lay the surveys and results before Mr. Molesworth, and work up the designs, in his office, on such style or principle as might then be decided on.

It may be at once explained that the idea of any other passage than by the Island of Bukkur was soon set aside, and the general tenor of the arrangement was (1) a bridge across the comparatively narrow

channel between Sukkur and the Island of Bukkur, (2) a railway line across that island, and (3) a large single-span bridge from the island to the bank at Rohri. This span would be from 850 to 880 feet according to the precise spot selected. About the bridge over the narrow channel there was little question, as there were good sites for piers; but the large single-span bridge would constitute the difficulty of the undertaking.

Having completed the surveys, Browne returned to Simla, and placed the whole matter before Mr. Molesworth, who was much satisfied with the thoroughness of Browne's investigations, and the good judgment of his conclusions. Having considered and discussed the matter fully, Mr. Molesworth, while holding other alternatives in view, set Browne to the preparation of a design, on the principle known as "stiffened suspension," at the site at which the present bridge was eventually erected.

Browne duly set to work, prepared the detailed designs, and worked out the calculations for the component parts, in a manner which elicited the highest encomiums from Sir Alexander Rendel, the Consulting Engineer to the India Office, and the other authorities concerned. They gave him special credit for "the skill and ingenuity with which he had applied the suspension principle, and the completeness and admirable finish of the designs and drawings."

As will be presently seen, the design was never carried out, but the final official notice of it ran thus:

"In relieving Major Browne, it is only just to him to acknowledge the value of his services in the preparations of the bridge designs; an inspection of them will show how very voluminous and elaborate they are. The calculations have entailed enormous

labour. Major Browne has not been satisfied with the calculations generally required for such works, but has investigated every principal condition in the most perfect manner. I cannot speak too highly of the ability he has shown, both in his mathematical investigations and in his practical suggestions in carrying out the details of this important structure; and in doing so he has shown himself possessed of a rare combination of theoretical skill and practical talent."

When the design had been finished and the estimates for its cost were worked out, the amount involved was found to be so serious that Mr. Molesworth thought it proper to set it aside, while considering other schemes. One alternative design was for a bridge altogether avoiding and below the Bukkur Island, with a number of short spans and steel cylinders; but the results of borings led to this idea being abandoned. His next scheme was that of a steel arch, which would have been less costly than the "stiffened suspension" plan, and which some competent judges think would have been the best after all. It was duly sent to England for consideration. It included a roadway, and in England objection was raised to this, though without it the bridge would not have been sufficiently stiff.

But at this crisis—*i.e.* while they were disputing about it—the cantilever system or principle had just been invented and brought forward—a perfectly novel idea, which caught the fancy generally; and it was forthwith adopted (in 1875) and eventually carried out, but not till after fourteen years of steady hard work. The bridge was completed, and formally opened by Lord Reay on February 9th, 1889.

Browne, however, was, as a matter of course, not well pleased with the summary stoppage of his designs, even on the assumed superiority of the other

principle; but it was not till December 9th, 1882, that he gave expression to this feeling, in writing to Government regarding their superseding by the cantilever system, on an assumed superiority of theoretical principle, the suspension system which they had originally prescribed and which he had worked out. He wrote thus:

"The East River Railway Suspension Bridge at New York, with a span of 1,000 feet, is just approaching completion. It is described in the *New York Christian Weekly* newspaper of December 13th, 1873, and I saw all the wire for it being made in 1876. This bridge cannot for a moment be compared as to strength and steadiness to the bridge for the Indus which I propose. The fact of its erection shows that the Americans at least have not abandoned the suspension principle."

Before quitting the subject of the Sukkur Bridge, it may be noted that when Browne first appeared there the place was almost at the limits of civilisation—at "where three empires meet," it may be said, at the junction of the wilds of Scinde, of Beloochistan, and of the Punjab deserts—where every one was apt to think himself his own master and superior to all others. The less his real authority and position might be, the greater generally was his assumption. Thereby hangs a tale.

A snag of a large tree, which was lying on the bank at Rohri, was interfering with Browne's work, and while talking casually on the spot to one of the gentry referred to, who may here be called Q., he remarked that he meant for that reason to throw it into the river. "Oh no," says his friend, "*I* won't let you do that. It would obstruct the navigation." After a little chaff Browne was formally and angrily forbidden, and warned against carrying out his

threat. Now Browne had a large steam launch there, so in the night he carried the snag on board and took it across to Bukkur, the island, and there landed it. His friend Q., on missing it next day, jumped to the conclusion that Browne had thrown it into the river in defiance of his warning, and forthwith handed the matter up to the Collector; and a long and very roundabout correspondence ensued, for Browne and Q. were under two different Governments—Scinde and India. Presently Browne carried the snag back to its former site, and in course of time was called on to explain his action. His answer was very simple—"The snag is where it was, and has never been thrown into the river." The huge piles of correspondence, red tape, and circumlocution, ending with the sharp rap over the knuckles to Q., need not be described.

Lord Mayo had been assassinated during Browne's furlough, and he had been eventually succeeded by Lord Northbrook, an administrator of liberal principles and strong practical sense, which left its impress on his Indian administration. The first prominent public event during his viceroyalty was a famine which broke out in Behar in 1874; and to Lord Northbrook belongs the credit of having, for the first time in the history of British India, succeeded completely in relieving distress and preventing deaths in an Indian famine. After the famine was over, the Prince of Wales visited India in 1875-6, and the outburst of loyalty which the visit evoked from all sections of the people in all parts of India forms one of the most memorable events of modern Indian history.

A good deal of not altogether unreasonable anxiety was expressed as to the Prince's safety. Lord Mayo's assassination was then fresh in people's memory,

and it was not the sole instance during late years of a high official being murdered. Religious fanatics are common in India, and with every precaution there still remained an appreciable amount of risk. This risk lay chiefly in the semi-madness of isolated individual fanatics, and very little, it would seem, in the action of emissaries of secret sects—such as those called Wahabees, though not off-shoots of the real Wahabees of the Red Sea or Arabia.

These sects occupy, among the Sunis or Turkish Moslems, much the same position as the Kojahs and other disciples of the "Old Man of the Mountain" occupy among the Shias or Persian Moslems. They are held by the learned and orthodox to be dangerous and fanatical heretics, but they are dreaded and courted by all classes. They are the natural vent for the undying fanaticism of Islam, requiring at all times to be watched, and in troubled times becoming a political force of much importance. Their head-quarters in India are at Patna, whence they feed colonies, as at Sitana, on the "Black Mountain" beyond the Indus, which we destroyed in 1863.[1] Mr. Taylor was commissioner at Patna in 1857, and, having learnt much of their secret intrigues, arrested their leader, and so saved Patna from an outbreak. There could be no doubt that very special precautions were still needed against the agents of these fanatics, but no one was better able to meet the danger without fuss or worry than Major Bradford,[2] who had been selected to be in constant attendance on His Royal Highness, and never to leave him while he stayed in India.

While all this was going on Browne had been

[1] *Vide* page 82.

[2] Afterwards Sir Edward Bradford, Head of the Police of London.

engaged at Simla on his designs in connection with the Sukkur Bridge, working in Mr. Molesworth's office—and was, of course, fully conversant there with the course of general events, both in India and on the frontier, as well as beyond it.

In regard to this, Lord Northbrook had entirely set aside Lord Mayo's policy, and reverted to that of Lord Lawrence, yclept Masterly Inactivity. It was a singular fact, it may be remarked, that there was no continuous policy in India during Browne's career there. Lawrence was the prototype of his own policy of Inactivity. Then came Mayo, who held out his hand to Russia and supported Shere Ali warmly: now we have Lord Northbrook going back to Inactivity, to be followed, it will be seen, by Lytton, a thorough progressive; he in his turn by Lord Ripon, another reactionary.

So Lord Northbrook, having adopted the Lawrence policy, refused to continue to the Ameer the practical countenance and support which Lord Mayo had given him. And he did this in face of the fact that the Ameer was now beginning to feel urgently, and to show vehemently that he so felt, the necessity for that support against the insidious advances and proposals of Kaufmann, the aggressive Russian Governor-General of Turkestan. For Kaufmann had now adopted a new route for his active operations and subsequent advance. The immediately previous route had, as referred to in the last chapter, been a failure; lying eastwards from Krasnovodsk on the eastern shore of the Caspian, it became lost in hopeless desert, and his new direction started from the same point on the Caspian, but ran more southerly by Kizil Arvat and along the borders of Persia towards Herat. And he was now, in the Russian manner, playing

his own independent game with Afghanistan, perfectly regardless of, and at variance with, the diplomatic action going on in higher quarters—*i.e.* between the courts of Russia and of England.

Lord Northbrook was carrying out, in its most complete form, the policy of Masterly Inactivity, or drift, not only in regard to the north-west frontier—*i.e.* towards Afghanistan and Russia, but also towards Beloochistan, which was now in a somewhat scandalous state of confusion. All the Beloochees were at feud, the minor clans among themselves, and they collectively with the head of the confederacy, the *primus inter pares*, the Khan of Khelat, a chief with whom Browne was to be much in contact. And further, the various English authorities, Merewether, Phayre, Sandeman, and others, were much at variance, having lost the strong guiding hand of Sir Henry Green.

But now, in 1874, Mr. Disraeli had become Prime Minister, and a change had come over the spirit of England's policy towards Afghanistan, which had reverted to that of Lord Mayo. The policy of maintaining that country as a strong, independent, but friendly state, had been accepted by the successive Viceroys, but carried out by differing methods. But a still more advanced policy than Lord Mayo's was now mooted—viz. that English agents should be established in the heart of Afghanistan in order to support and guide that power more effectually. Lord Salisbury, now Secretary of State for India, had sent a dispatch embodying the new policy in January, 1875. Lord Northbrook, strong in the strength of his own convictions, remonstrated. In the following year, having again differed from the Secretary of State—this time on the financial policy of India—he received a censure, and forthwith resigned.

But Lord Northbrook's rule cannot be justly described without referring to one special incident in it, the subject being one in which Browne's personal interest was particularly strong, though it has no direct connection with his career. The last chapter of the history of the negro slave-trade was, at the time, generally thought to be completed by the result of the American Civil War and the collapse of slavery in the United States. The European Powers had long been united, with greater or less sincerity and zeal, in seeking to effect its abolition. In the analogous case of white slavery in Russia, the Emperor Alexander had already freed the Serfs in 1861, and paid the penalty for it by being dynamited. Hence the adhesion of the United States, whose attitude had hitherto been doubtful, gave a unanimity of support to its prohibition, which the Powers were now strong enough, if they had the will, to impose upon the whole world.

The occasion was not long wanting. It became known that the slaves, who had been kidnapped under circumstances of horrible atrocity in the interior of Africa, were being exported in large and yearly increasing numbers from Zanzibar, Kilwa, and other places on the east coast, to the ports of the Red Sea and Persian Gulf. The dhows in which they were shipped, running with their lateen sails spread before the south-west monsoon, could distance any steamer then on the coast. The English squadron, inadequate in numbers and equipment for the special service, and without the means of obtaining timely information, zealously as its men and officers performed their arduous duties, could do little to check the traffic. The captures which they made scarcely compensated for the additional suffering caused to

the slaves by the increased crowding and the precautions taken by their masters against capture.

England, when Lord Palmerston was in power, had been wont to take the lead in the contest with the slave trade; and it belonged especially to England to do so in the present case, because the Zanzibar territory, whence nearly all the slaves were shipped, was, or might at her will become, as much under British influence as a native state of India; and the East African merchants who profited by the traffic were most of them Banians—British subjects from India. But though Lord Palmerston was no longer there, another Englishman now stepped into the breach, Sir Lewis Pelly—in fact two Englishmen, the other being Sir Bartle Frere; and between them, aided by the local officer, Dr. Kirk, they so acted on the Sultan of Zanzibar that on June 5th, 1873, he signed a treaty abolishing and closing slavery on his coast for ever. In this treaty he formally and explicitly engaged that the transport and export of slaves from the coast for any purpose should cease entirely, that all public slave markets in his dominions should be closed, and that protection should be given to liberated slaves. It was at the same time arranged that natives of Indian states under British protection should be prohibited from possessing slaves.

There now remained only one territory under British sway where slavery was still in force—and not only in force, but being extended by a portion of the population with all their might—and that was in South Africa among its Boer population. We all know what Mrs. Josephine Butler and Sir Charles Warren had to say on the subject.

To return. The design for the Sukkur Bridge was the concluding item in the continuous Engineer em-

ployment or study, which began on Browne's return to India in 1864, and consequently covered a period of eleven years—and he had by this time proved himself as capable and as many-sided in varied engineering of a high class as he had done in the rough-and-ready work and ingenious contrivances of his earlier days; and he was now about to leave it—after some preliminary explorations and surveys—for a turn of political and military experiences.

During all this period of eleven years he had been out of direct touch with public matters, excepting those in which he had been closely concerned, and which were almost entirely of only local interest. But the results of the more general and grave events at its close give an important colouring and effect to the duties on which he would soon be engaged, and they will therefore be touched on briefly.

During Lord Mayo's rule Russia, as has been already shown, had not been making any actual advance towards the south, being occupied chiefly with the Kirghiz and other tribes on the more northern parts of Central Asia, and in approaches by the north towards such positions as Khiva.

But with the revival of Masterly Inactivity under Northbrook came a change. Kaufmann began an insidious correspondence with Shere Ali—insidious, that is, considering the real and recognised position of affairs, which was this: The Russian Chancellor had declared in the spring of 1869, that Afghanistan was "completely outside the sphere within which Russia may be called upon to exercise her influence," and in the following November he had informed Sir A. Buchanan that "he saw no objection whatever to English officers visiting Cabul, though he agreed with Lord Mayo that Russian agents should not do so."

Yet now, in spite of these assurances, Kaufmann sent Russian agents in 1870 to Cabul with letters to Shere Ali, thus starting correspondence between Tashkent and the Afghan capital which was first continued in a desultory and insidious manner until the year 1874, and then began to assume a more important aspect; for in the spring of that year General Kolpakoffsky, in Kaufmann's absence, *wrote a letter to Shere Ali* which was very significant in tone, referring to "devotion" on the side of the Ameer and "grace" on the part of the Czar. After this there was a brief pause in the correspondence; but next year fresh letters were sent to the Ameer, and from that time they became more frequent and more significant in tone, Kaufmann, now again on the scene, even going so far as to propose to Shere Ali that he should sign a treaty of commerce, and also enter into an offensive and defensive alliance with the Russian Government. This was categorically denied by Prince Gortchakoff; but in spite of this the correspondence was continued, and after two years more of secret negotiations, it became evident to the Indian Government that Kaufmann had succeeded in turning Shere Ali aside from his alliance with the English.

CHAPTER IX

THE BELOOCHISTAN APPOINTMENT: 1876

LORD LYTTON'S PREPARATION FOR THE VICEROYALTY—HIS ARRIVAL IN INDIA—PALMERSTON'S VIEWS ABOUT RUSSIAN METHODS—HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF BELOOCHISTAN.

WHILE Browne was engaged on the designs for the Sukkur Bridge, Lord Northbrook's rule was approaching its end in ordinary course, but it stopped short before that course was over, in consequence of the change of ministry in England, and the resulting change in the policy of England in India and elsewhere, in regard to the Eastern Question—a change in which Lord Northbrook could not acquiesce.

To carry out these changes, Lord Lytton was selected for the viceroyalty, and he at once proceeded vigorously to acquire the special knowledge desirable for the post, and to make the needful arrangements and master the questions that seemed likely to be involved.

In proposing now to describe his preparations, an unusual step in this memoir, it seems necessary to explain that this departure from the ordinary course of the narrative is advisable in consequence primarily of Lord Lytton's exceptional characteristics, as a man of genius, and as an autocratic administrator

and statesman determined to disregard conventional usages.

It will be seen that he was unique in setting aside the ordinary course for the selection and employment of officers for the several Government posts, and that one of his first special selections was that of Browne; starting him on quite a new career and in a new line, by which he was forthwith, and permanently, brought into direct contact with the Supreme Government and its highest officers.

Three months elapsed between Lord Lytton's acceptance of the viceroyalty and his arrival in India to take up its duties—and this interval was fully occupied in study and preparation for them, including prolonged conversations with men of mark, and of experience cognate to his future work. John Lawrence and John Forster, FitzJames Stephen and Bartle Frere, were among those whom he thus consulted; and not the least important of his discussions were those he held with the Russian Ambassador, Shouvaloff. For the chief and most pressing of the matters to be dealt with on his arrival in India was the situation in regard to the Eastern Question, as it involved a new departure in the attitude of England and Russia and in the external and frontier policy of the Indian Government. For while the frontier relations, *i.e.* with Afghanistan, had been easy and the dangers from Russian intrigues far distant when Lord Northbrook had entered on his career, the great change already mentioned had arisen, the Ameer had by this time become alienated, and the plots and schemes of the Russian frontier politicals were clouding the near horizon and assuming a threatening aspect. Kaufmann was corresponding directly and entering into close relations with the Ameer, as if

with an independent foreign Power, free of any connection with England or the Indian Government. The Ameer, on the other hand, while seeking vehemently the support and help of India, had been frightened and alienated by Lord Northbrook's coldness and harshness and his absolute disregard of his (the Ameer's) positive assertions of the rooted objection of the Afghans to the presence of Englishmen in their country. He would not tolerate this apathetic attitude, and feeling himself unable either to get from England the support he needed, or on the other hand to stand alone, he was gradually throwing himself into the arms of Russia for alliance and help.

Lord Lytton, though learning that all this had been going on, did not feel so fully as he might otherwise have done, and as others had felt, the insidious ways in force with Russia in Asia—one policy between the courts of Russia and England, and a perfectly different one between the subordinate rulers of Turkestan and India—for he had been more concerned with the Russian proceedings with Turkey and in England. By the end of 1875, while preparing for his new charge, Lytton had before him the fact that Russia was pushing forward in Central Asia, and was now supporting Bosnia and other states in hostility to Turkey; but it was not till he had reached India that the actively hostile measures of Russia against Turkey itself began. Meanwhile he had come to one important conclusion, in concert with Sir Bartle Frere, with whose views he found himself entirely in unison, that (1) an alliance with Cabul was the most important and effective arrangement to be aimed at; but (2) if that was found impossible, then it should be sought for at Khelat, Candahar, and Herat, and in Persia.

Eventually Lord Lytton left England on March 1st, 1876; and after meeting Frere and others *en route*, reached Bombay on April 7th, and Calcutta on the 12th, when he took the oaths and charge of the viceroyalty—then towards the end of the month he proceeded to Simla.

Now, not only was Lord Lytton himself a genius, as has been noted, but he was careful to be accompanied by another exceptional genius in Colonel Colley, nominally his Military Secretary, but in point of fact so exceptionally his close adviser in all matters that he superseded almost all other officials, and was veritably his *alter ego*. Was this likely to be a safe combination, added as it was to a disregard amounting almost to contempt, save in a few instances, of established capacity and repute?

It must be explained that, though a crisis was at hand, the whole of the proceedings of Russia in the course of this narrative of the events with which Browne was concerned on the north-west frontier of India were in strict conformity with her habitual policy and practice as specially described by Lord Palmerston, and expressed in the *Memoirs*[1] of Lord Lytton's administration as follows:

"The Russians have always pushed forward their policy of encroachments as fast and as far as the apathy and want of firmness of other Governments would allow it to go, but have always stopped and retired when it was met with decided resistance, and then waited for the next favourable opportunity to make another spring on its intended victim. In furtherance of this policy they have always had two strings to their bow—moderate language and disinterested professions at Petersburg and London, active aggressions by their agents on the scene of operations. If the

[1] See page 70 of it.

aggressions succeed locally, the Petersburg Government adopt them as a *fait accompli*, which it had not intended, but cannot in honour recede from. If the local agents fail, they are disarmed and recalled, and the language previously held is appealed to as a proof that the agents have overstepped their instructions.

"This was exemplified in the treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi and in the exploits of Simonivitch and Vikovitch in Persia. Orloff succeeded in extorting the treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi from the Turks, and it was represented as a sudden thought suggested by the circumstances of the time and place, and not the result of any previous instructions; but having been done, it could not be undone.

"On the other hand Simonivitch and Vikovitch failed in getting possession of Herat in consequence of our vigorous measures of resistance; and, as they failed and when they had failed, they were disavowed and recalled, and the language held at Petersburg was appealed to as a proof of the sincerity of the disavowal, although no human being with two ideas in his head could for a moment doubt that they had acted under specific instructions."

With Lord Lytton's arrival in India as a new Viceroy we come, as has been said, to the turning-point in Browne's career. Heretofore he had been more or less on his trial in many varieties of employment, and successful in all, with corresponding repute, though practically as yet only local. But, as has been described, Lord Lytton was inclined to look about and choose and decide for himself. So no sooner did he get to Simla, than he took notice of Browne, found that his present work was, temporarily at any rate, at an end or at a definitive stage, and selected him forthwith for a special temporary task—the survey of the country between Sukkur (to which he still belonged) and Sibi at the foot of the Bolan Pass. It may be pointed out that the country lying between Sukkur and Sibi is part of the

Beloochistan territory, and his work in it would throw him into close relations with its people, the Beloochees, just as his old work near Attock and Peshawur had done in regard to the Pathans of that more northern district.

Further, all his future work was to lie in this direction, excepting in the instance of the Egyptian war, and of his tenure of the post of Quartermaster-General of the army; and here too, eventually, he was to end his days while still in harness. It may be safely added that with its prosperity his name will ever be identified, and also that his views and proposals clinched its importance and value to the empire by constituting in it the site of the principal defensive position against hostile aggression on our north-west frontier.

Before entering on the story of his personal work and operations, it may be as well to describe the lie of the principal places. About fifty miles north-west of Sukkur is Jacobabad, where the British ruler of old used to reside. Khelat, the capital of the province and the fortress of the Khan, lies about a hundred miles to the west, and Sibi, at the foot of the Quetta Hills, the same distance to the north-west of Jacobabad, with Dadur, an important city, a few miles off. At Kusmore, some way up the river, is a huge embankment, at the site where the old course of the Indus bent in from its present channel.

With these preliminary remarks on the scene of Browne's future work, we turn to the description and recent history of the province and its people.

Until the period which our story has now reached, Beloochistan was an almost unknown region, and had not been dealt with by the British Government or its officers, except in connection with the old

Afghan war, and as a district to be severely checked and kept in order.

Our agency for this purpose used to lie in (1) our wardens of the Marches of Scinde, where Beloochistan and Scinde were conterminous, and (2) in the Punjab Government stretching northwards from Scinde. The first step of this story of Beloochistan is naturally that of the state of matters described by the last of those famous rulers—the wardens of those marches—Sir Henry Green, the representative of such predecessors and administrators as Sir Charles Napier, Sir James Outram, Sir Bartle Frere, John Jacob, Malcolm Green, Merewether, and others. The description now given is based on information kindly given by Sir Henry Green.

Scinde is divided from Beloochistan by the Brahui range of mountains, which rise near the sea to the west of Kurrachee and run north to the west of Shikarpore, and then trend north-west to Quetta, forming the southern side of the Bolan Pass—of which the northern side forms part of the Suliman Range, and joins the Himalayas north of Peshawur.

Nearly all the *Belooch* tribes reside in the *plains*, including Cutchee. All the *Brahui* tribes reside in the *mountains* of Beloochistan. They are quite distinct from each other in every way, as will be more fully shown later on. Sir Henry Green is of opinion that the tribes inhabiting Beloochistan originally consisted of Hindoos who had fled from Rajpootana, and India generally, owing to political convulsions—and that in the mountains of Beloochistan, west of the Indus, they were practically safe. When Alexander the Great passed through Scinde, the Punjab, and Beloochistan, *en route* to Bagdad, he dropped numbers of people in the country that had followed his army

from Scythia, etc., as there are many tribes with Scythian names among those that inhabit Mekran. There are also some who still retain in their marriages many of the old Greek rites.

Then about 700 A.D. came the Mahomedan invasions when all were turned to that faith, including the people of Scinde. Many of the Belooch—not Scinde—tribes have all the appearance of both Grecian and Arab descent. And in travelling in Syria and Palestine Sir Henry found tribes bearing the same names as those on the Scinde frontiers. All Beloochees wear the turban, the Scindees a cap of one shape, the Brahuis one of another shape.

The whole Beloochee question is a very extraordinary one; but too long to allow of more than a short outline. The Scindee, the Belooch, and the Brahui are all distinct from each other. The men who fought Sir C. Napier at Meeanee were mainly Scindees, but some Belooch tribes joined them. Sir C. Napier, however, not knowing better, called them all Belooch. It may be parenthetically mentioned, as a first step in civilisation, that since General Jacob's days there has ever been this feature in common—that there has been no forced labour in any part of the district.

The first officer who had direct influence and control over these Beloochees in the days of this story was Captain, afterwards Sir Robert, Sandeman. When he first went to Beloochistan, it was as one of the civil frontier officers of the *Punjab*, and at that time the principal looting tribes along its frontier, of which he was cognisant, were the Murrees and Bhoogtees. These, being Belooch, were *nominally* under the control of the Khan of Khelat; but he, in fact, had no *real* control over them, for unfortunately

half their country lay on the frontier of Scinde and the other half on that of the Punjab—so that they came under two opposite systems of management.

On the Scinde frontier the outpost officers were held responsible for maintaining the frontier intact from raids, and they did not care under whose supposed control the raiders were. Any *armed* man crossing our frontier was killed. All natives inside the Scinde frontier were disarmed, so as to prevent their making raids into the mountains and causing the inhabitants there to retaliate; for this would have kept up a constant state of irritation and bloodshed.

In the Punjab, however, all within the border were allowed to carry arms and do what they liked, and the military were under the political agents, and could not move without their authority. Now the Murrees and the Bhoogtees were the tribes that lay on the frontier of the Punjab (as distinguished from Scinde), and they used to loot in the Punjab in retaliation for the men from inside the Punjab frontier looting them; and the moment a looting party of Murrees or Bhoogtees perpetrated a raid in the Punjab, Sandeman, the Punjab officer, would write to the Scinde officers to call upon the Khan of Khelat to control his subjects. They were not, however, his subjects; but the Khan, it may be explained, received a yearly subsidy of 50,000 rupees, not for any general control, but specifically for keeping open the Bolan Pass for the free travelling of *kafilas*. Sir Henry, as an expert, knew that the Khan had no real or practical control over these tribes; and his reply used to be, "If they attempt to loot me, I hold my outpost officers responsible, and the looters get killed. I do not run howling to the Khan of Khelat."

His hint obviously was that Sandeman should do likewise.

Sir Henry knew that as matters stood the Khan could not control the Beloochees, and that what was needed and what he strongly recommended was that the Scinde frontier should be extended so as to take in the whole of the country inhabited by the Murree and Bhoogtee tribes; and had he been able to remain, this would probably have been done. All would then have been under one system—and no more would have been heard from Sandeman about raids.

But when Sir Henry Green gave up the command of the frontier of Scinde, it was placed under the late Sir R. Phayre, who knew nothing of frontier matters; and a change came over the scene. Merewether was then Commissioner of Scinde. Sandeman saw his chance, came to Jacobabad, and soon got Phayre under his influence; and then they both set to work to oppose Merewether and to upset Jacob's system. The question really developed into a special phase of the chronic coolness or variance between Bombay, and the Government of India with the Punjab as its local representative.

Sandeman was backed up by the Foreign Secretary in Calcutta; and the end was that Merewether was appointed to the Indian Council to get him out of the way, and the Murrees and Bhoogtees were placed under Sandeman's political rule.

Afterwards, when Lord Lytton went out as Governor-General, he sent for Green and asked him to go to India with him to advise him in regard to the frontier, giving him an account of the conversation he had held with the Russian Ambassador. Green declined, but wrote him a long memorandum on the subject of Beloochistan and the frontier. In

this memorandum he said that the political officer, whoever he might select, in charge of Beloochistan should be raised to the position of a Commissioner, be placed direct under the Governor-General, and have his status greatly improved.

So much for the history of the pre-Lytton days; but eventually—that is, in the period with which the story is now about to deal, when Lord Lytton arrived on the frontier—Sandeman was there to meet him, and got him under his influence. The whole of Green's programme was then carried out, for Sandeman was put in charge backed by the Governor-General, when of course all official difficulty was at an end.

The preceding remarks contain a genuine account of the past of the people of the Belooch tract, as shown by Sir Henry Green, but further details will be given later on. Meanwhile it may be readily seen what difficulties the real administration of the tract, eventually vested in Sir R. Sandeman, had to deal with and surmount. The immediate successor to Green had been Merewether, and he had adopted the principles of his predecessors—Frere, Jacob, and the Greens; but he was an obstruction to those in power, and met with divided counsels and with more or less of opposition instead of support; and whatever the personal results, a wavering and uncertain policy arose and naturally brought about a want of confidence in British consistency and sincerity.

Having dealt with the previous story of the Beloochees before they really came under our cognisance except as a race outside our control, and requiring to be watched and coerced, we have now to describe more fully their habits and characteristics. For their relations with us during the twenty-eight years from 1875, when they first came into closer

contact with us, till they had turned into cheery and hearty subjects of Browne's genial sway, have shown them to be one of the finest and most promising races that have been brought within the ring fence of British Rule.

Their country varies in character, being mountainous along its northern half and a plain elsewhere; so that the men are partly horsemen and partly footmen or camel-drivers. As a whole Beloochistan is an oblong tract of country running from north-east to south-west between the Punjab and Persia, and bordered by Afghanistan and Scinde on the north-west and south-east respectively, with the River Indus flowing close along the border in Scinde. The Beloochees are a feudal race, divided into clans and owing vassalage and obedience to their chiefs like the Highlanders of Scotland and the Rajpoots of Rajpootana and Oude. But they had no monarch, and were not under any other sway.

They are a wild and warlike people, and by religion are Mahomedans, but they differ from nearly all other Mahomedans in the liberty they allow to the women of the race, who are left quite free and are not kept under any seclusion or surveillance. But the strictest conduct and decorum are required from them, and ferocious and unchecked punishment is meted out to them for any misconduct. When their own relations do not admit the truth of the suspicion and the justice of the consequent punishments or murders, family feuds are apt to ensue, merging, it may be, into tribal, racial, and international wars.

The result was the prevalence of anarchy throughout the whole province and on its Afghan and Persian borders, taking the form of raids in the case of the British frontiers—*i.e.* of the Punjab and

Scinde. It is with the result of these raids that we have to deal. Until 1876 the Commissioner of Scinde used to take cognisance of the raids into Scinde, and a Punjab frontier political officer of those across the Punjab frontier; but the Scinde administration having raised the question of the management of all Belooch raids being left in their hands, it was eventually settled, in 1876, by the Government of India that there should be an entire change, and that all the Belooch tribes of Beloochistan should be recognised as a Belooch confederacy, with the Khan of Khelat as its chief; and that the management of their affairs should not be left to Scinde, but entrusted to one selected officer dealing direct with the Government of India, to be called the Governor-General's Agent (G.G.A.) for Beloochistan. The officer then appointed to the post, who therefore was the first to take full charge of Beloochistan affairs, was Colonel Robert Sandeman; who, as the Punjab political officer on the spot, had managed the discussion on the Punjab side. He retained the post for sixteen years, from 1876 till his death in 1892. This arrangement settled two matters: (1) the charge of the relations between Government and the people of Beloochistan; and (2) the constitution of the confederate Beloochee tribes.

But the real work had now to begin—*i.e.* the suppression of the chronic anarchy; for whatever the causes of that anarchy, it had to be suppressed and law and order introduced. Now besides the one great cause already explained, another had been at work for some time. The greatest of the tribes was that of which the Khan of Khelat was the head—and his position was that of the feudal leader of all the confederate tribes of Beloochistan. It was owing to this that in the first war with Afghanistan the

British had attacked him and stormed his fort, in the defence of which he had been killed.

But the present Khan, Khodadad Khan, had been aiming at the suppression of the confederacy by the crushing of the other tribes—and at thus securing for himself the monarchy of the country. This the other Khans universally and strenuously resisted. Hence the second great cause of anarchy.

In fact the great disturbing element in Beloochistan, throughout Sandeman's incumbency of the post, lay in the unsettled relations that had arisen between the Khan and the other chiefs of the clans. For against this personal aim of the one man, Khodadad Khan, and his own tribal following was arrayed the whole force of the other Belooch tribes, and also of the British Power, to enforce peace and tranquillity. But apparently Sandeman was not disposed to utilise these influences so much as the power of personal persuasion and friendliness. He made great strides in this direction during his sixteen years of rule, and would probably have effected it thoroughly but for the fact that his own health was failing, and he had to take leave to England repeatedly during his agency. This unavoidably prevented his doing justice to his own intense desire for peaceful and persuasive methods of settling the country.

His first and immediate task, then, was to try to reconcile the several tribes with the Khan of Khelat and with each other. He met the Khan at Khelat in 1876, and the incidents on that occasion showed the Khan's objection to any interference with his right to take the law into his own hands. His agents attacked and slaughtered first some of the followers of the Brahui chiefs coming by order to the Khelat durbar, and then Noor Deen, one of those chiefs

himself. But this untoward behaviour did not deter the holding of another meeting shortly afterwards at Mastung, in which the Khan and the Sirdars came to a formal agreement and pledge, signing an instrument to forget the past and cease all hostilities. This forthwith led, after reference to England, to a formal treaty, which, as will be seen later on, was concluded at a meeting of Lord Lytton with the Khan and the whole body of Beloochee Sirdars; at which the independence of the Khan and the Sirdars was recognised, but the British Government was constituted the final referee in cases of dispute, and obtained the supreme control over Beloochistan affairs, with the right of locating troops in the territory.

Sandeman had now got the Beloochees in hand, to a certain extent, and had been endeavouring—and after a while with success, but only to a partial extent and unstable degree—to induce the chiefs to come to terms with each other and with the Khan. But it was uphill and very anxious work for some time to come. Browne, who had arrived on the scene, felt that he carried his life in his hand. The country was quite new to the English. The inhabitants had heretofore been kept at arm's length by those who resided outside their frontier. Not only did feuds prevail among the Beloochees themselves, but practically the state of the country was one of utter lawlessness; and bad and wild characters, fanatics and would-be assassins, prowled about all over these districts unchecked.

Sandeman, as yet, had only personal influence—no real power or authority with the people. It was, for all practical purposes, a foreign state, where no man acknowledged any authority save that of his feudal superior, and where pure anarchy prevailed.



BELOOCHEE CHIEF AND TWO SONS.

[*To face p.* 146.

The first sign of an approaching change, of a chance of peacefulness, began at the time of Lord Lytton's assumption of the viceroyalty; and as it was probable that highly placed representatives, if not Lord Lytton himself, might visit the provinces ere long, the most persistent and strenuous efforts were being made during 1876 to improve the state of matters, and with this much success, that the Khan had allowed communications to be held with England, in hopes of raising his own status. But until settled Government, settled habits, and formal agreements came on the scene, strife, murder, and chaos were bound to prevail; not that the people were naturally ferocious, but that the Khan himself was specially so, and gave the murky taint to the social atmosphere.

Much, however, was done during 1876, that first year of the Lytton rule. Quetta was quietly occupied first by local troops, and then by a Sikh regiment; and roads and improvements were begun, with some necessary military and police arrangements, and the occupation of important points in the roads and passes. So that, except in his outrages against those clans and clansmen whom he deemed hostile to himself, the Khan of Khelat did not actually check the advance of the improvements in his state, though he kept Sandeman and the British in a fever of anxiety as to the increased anarchy, if not actual warfare, that might ensue if a formal treaty were not soon ratified, giving the British Government the powers necessary to ensure the proper tranquillity of the state.

For meanwhile the aspect of affairs in the Afghanistan direction and beyond it was threatening—and important measures were being adopted, though very quietly, by the British Government.

CHAPTER X

THE CUTCHEE AND BELOOCHISTAN FRONTIER: 1876-8

FURTHER HISTORY OF BROWNE'S DOUBLE—BROWNE IN THE CUTCHEE—COLLEY SENT TO BELOOCHISTAN—LORD LYTTON'S POLICY—RUSSIA'S MOVEMENTS—BROWNE'S POST ON THE KAKUR FRONTIER.

AT this juncture, in addition to the account of Beloochistan and its people, it is expedient to break the narrative of Browne's personal career by dealing with the case of his double, to which allusion has already been made in Chapter VI. It has been stated that a young English officer retired from the service, intending to lead a life of travel and adventure, and that this officer bore a singular resemblance to Browne. Our narrative will now deal with these travels and adventures until, owing to that resemblance, he came, in a marked manner and with singular results, into Browne's story.

Our double at first retired from Peshawur into the neighbouring hill tracts, studied hard at Pushtoo, Persian, Arabic, and such other Oriental languages as might be useful, and there fell in with an enterprising Mullah named Abdul Razak; took a strong liking to him, which led by degrees to warm and lasting friendship; and under his guidance got

thoroughly initiated into Afghan and Mahomedan ways and habits. They soon agreed to travel together in Oriental lands as merchants; and, as a first step, he crossed the frontier with his friend, disguised as a Mullah, with the assumed name of Ishmael Ali.

Then they joined a *kafila* (or caravan) travelling by Bokhara, Merv, Persia, and Asia Minor, to Constantinople. After a prolonged halt there, where they had added to their position and means by the study and practice of medicine and of mesmerism, they went still farther afield, made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and so became *hajees* and people of importance, whatever the community into which they might be thrown.

In this prosperous state as *hajees*, as traders, and as doctors and mesmerists, they first returned to Constantinople, and thence proceeded back to Herat, and Ghuznee, and so on to Cabul—not retracing their steps, but adopting a new route.

At Mecca they had been presented by the Shereef with a special copy of the Koran, and they now decided to present this to the Ameer of Cabul, Shere Ali. In due course, after reaching Cabul, they appeared before the Ameer, presented the Koran, were graciously received, and after an interval went south to Abdul Razak's family village of Deela, near Mukkur and Lake Abistade, which lie on the east of the road from Ghuznee to Khelat-i-Ghilzie, halfway between them. There, in course of time, he married and settled down.

Ishmael Ali was obviously a man of much shrewdness, spirit, and enterprise; in physique he was very powerful and sturdy, and fond of athletics—and in appearance had grown very like Browne, with the

same eyes, face, beard, and figure. While at Deela, he continued to pose as a Mullah and a doctor, acquired a reputation for sanctity, and was much resorted to and noticed. He entered fully into Afghan family life, and became a great favourite in the local circles, his only peculiarity—for which he used to be chaffed—being his making a pet, contrary to all native propriety, of a dog which he always had with him. To the Ameer and others he made no secret of being an Englishman, but in his habits and ways, manner of life and demeanour, acted fully up to his assumed rôle of Mahomedan Mullah.

It is not known in what year Ishmael Ali settled down at Deela or Mukkur; but assuming it to have been about 1870—*i.e.* five years after his start over the Peshawur borders—he would in the course of the next four years—*i.e.* by 1874-5—have become known to many of the Pathans and Ghilzyes who travelled to the Quetta frontier either by the direct road from Cabul to Candahar, or by the eastern passes to the Derajat and Beloochistan.

Hence it was that Ghilzyes and others who travelled southwards through Mukkur, and then wandered about in Beloochistan, where Browne had begun to survey and work, were struck by his resemblance to the Mullah, and talked to each other of it.

Further, any mysterious idea on the point, or on the consequent question of identity, was strengthened by the fact, to which further allusion will be made later on, that the veritable Mullah had now begun to be employed by the Ameer, being sent southwards to Candahar and elsewhere to ascertain and report on the proceedings of the British and others in that quarter—the more so because he, the Ameer, had quarrelled with the Ghilzye clan, who would naturally

have been his agents for such inquiries. Hence arose the fact that the travelling Afghan community and the Ghilzyes especially began in 1876 to assert that Browne was the Mullah in disguise. And from this fact, another followed—most important—that he went about amongst all these wild folk and the swarms of fanatics in perfect safety, impervious to the attack of Ghazees and the like.

The task which had been now assigned to Browne was twofold: one the reconnaissance, in view of roads and railroads, between Sukkur and Quetta, including the Cutchee Plain and the passes from it to Pesheen, all lying in Beloochistan; and the other the setting out across that plain of an alignment for a road or railway from Sukkur to Dadur, at the foot of the Bolan Pass.

This apparently involved only the examination, from an engineer's point of view, of a comparatively small tract of country; but Browne, with his thoughtful mind and broad views, saw that even the engineer part of the question he had to deal with was not really a small, but a very serious and extensive one, stretching far beyond the area designated—and that in addition to this the subject was gravely affected by our relations with the border tribes, and by the outlook from the action and bearings of the Afghanistan and Eastern questions, and was consequently of great *political*, as well as engineer, importance.

To take the latter points first, he had not hitherto, either at Sukkur or elsewhere, seen much of the real Beloochees, and he was now surprised and pleased to find them a much heartier and pleasanter people to get on with than the Pathans and than he had expected; but at the same time he realised another fact, that in the more hilly ground between the plains

and Pesheen, Afghans and Pathans, and not Beloochees only, were in great numbers—and fanatic Pathans roamed about freely. Further, the Afghanistan and Eastern questions were advancing into a more prominent and acute stage, and, as already touched on, a great change had occurred in the political outlook since the days when Lord Mayo was Governor-General. The Ameer, who was then on the most friendly terms with us, had since become alienated and irritated by the decision in the arbitration regarding the province of Seistan, of which he was now to retain only a portion. And at the same time the persistent advances and absorptions of Russia, and the diplomacy of her agents, especially with the Ameer, were making vigorous and decisive action necessary on the part of the British Government. Browne had begun to watch this matter keenly; and in these circumstances, and one other—the matter of his double—no more fortunate selection than that of Browne could have been made for the task which he had now in hand. To himself it was of great value, because it led to his seeking for and acquiring a still more thorough knowledge of those border tribes and their complications, and of the numerous bearings of the Afghanistan and Eastern questions, and to his soon discriminating between the real people of the country and the aliens.

While Browne was engaged on his initial steps, the Government and the Khan of Khelat were awaiting the receipt from England of the treaty which had been proposed for more intimate relations with the Khan; and now before the year was over, and while Browne was hard at work, the treaty arrived.

The first overt step taken was the dispatch to Beloochistan in early autumn, 1876, of the inevitable

Colonel Colley to influence the Khan towards its proper adoption. The phrase "inevitable" is used of set purpose, for from this time forward all the customary official agency for any particular task was set aside, and Colley was substituted for it. The result was, for a time at any rate, a success—and very shortly after Colley appeared in Beloochistan came the Viceroy himself, who in the end made much of the Khan, and invited him to attend the great durbar at Delhi then impending, for the proclamation of the Queen as Empress of India.

Colonel Colley had presented the proposed treaty to the Khan and also the invitation to the impending gathering at Delhi, and on November 8th Lord Lytton carried through the treaty. Its objects were:

1. The maintenance of our commanding influence in Khelat.
2. A strong and settled Government.
3. The freedom and security of the Bolan Pass.
4. The pacification of the Cutchee plains.
5. Arrangements for Quetta.

Since then, the Bolan Pass has never been closed; and although the local tribes and people were very warlike and had never been settled heretofore, Browne was surveying away among them, exciting their curiosity with his instruments and proceedings, and carrying his life in his hand. Still, as his manner was, he gradually became known and popular among the people—and no evil ever occurred.

In the south, towards Sukkur and Quetta and Beloochistan generally, much more real activity—not merely these diplomatic proceedings—had been started. There was genuine hard work in hand. The old turmoils have been described, and Sande-

man's difficulties in the management of the Belooch chiefs and clans. Now, however, he had at last begun to acquire personal influence with the Khan of Khelat, the *fons et origo mali*—and the more formal negotiations, pressed by Lord Lytton, were also being settled, as it was a matter of grave moment that this territory of Beloochistan, on the southern borders of Afghanistan, should be not only quiet, but friendly, during the impending struggle. Browne, too, as a matter of course, was vigorously engaged on his survey.

Meanwhile, besides the survey, he had the specific duty to carry out of laying down the alignment of the road towards the passes—and this task he performed in the course of his survey work on this wild and new country, where every man's hand seemed to be against every one else. But his old *bonhomie* carried him through it all. The people, as usual, took a liking to him; and while he used to hear of barbarities all round, he was never seriously molested. His use of his astronomical and other instruments, and little useful, though almost childish, presents for which he had arranged, interested and pleased the chiefs and people; and he really became a power with them. He pulled thoroughly well with Sandeman and received his hearty support—the more especially that the results of his survey and other work were most useful and valuable to Sandeman's administrative wants during these early rough days of the beginning of a civilised Beloochistan.

In proceeding with his survey, then, and his alignment, during which he was alone and without escort, he found it at first pleasanter, as has been mentioned, than he had expected, owing to the genial character of the Beloochees; but in the higher ground nearer

the northern border the great mixture of races in the inhabitants made the work there harder, though altogether he was enabled in the end to acquire a very correct knowledge of the measures necessary for the utilisation of the passes.

What, however, involved a wider and more serious question was the engineer treatment of the tract in the plain along the foot of the hill country through which the passes ran. In his early charge on the Punjab frontier, his duty had taken him as far south as the Kusmore embankment, and he had been always impressed with its liability to being breached by exceptional floods in the Indus and with the consequences that might ensue. Now, therefore, in dealing with the question of routes for railway and other communications, he held that this point demanded careful consideration, and consequently he continued his reconnaissance of the plain between the Indus and the hills more eastwards up to Kusmore, and learnt by his levels that a breach of the embankment would, to a certainty, permanently interrupt any road communication between Sukkur (with the Indus Valley Railway there) and the hills at Quetta—for this reason, that through the whole length of that Cutchee Plain there ran a hollow depression, which would form a new channel for the waters of the Indus on their escaping through the Kusmore breach.

He had been on this survey all through the winter of 1876-7, and had received direct instructions on particular points from the Viceroy himself, in accordance with Lord Lytton's exceptional practice; and by March, 1877, he had ascertained all this, besides including the Dadur district within his inquisition—and still more, he had, as already mentioned, located

a portion of a line of railway between Sukkur and Sibi, the entrance of the Bolan Pass. Though he had been practically alone on this survey, he had been again brought much into contact with Sir G. Molesworth, under whom he had been engaged on the Sukkur Bridge designs, and a very warm friendship had now sprung up between them; and he had hoped to be allowed to plot his work at Simla and be able to explain matters to the Viceroy—but this was negatived.

He therefore arranged to send his family to England, and then without further delay he went to Mooltan and there drew up his report; in which, besides dealing with the points that had been proposed to him and criticising them fully, he went farther, and boldly suggested and explained the much more extensive operations which the lie of the country and the weak points of the Kusmore embankment made necessary—especially in view of the aspect of affairs in Afghanistan and the possible effects of the insidious advance of Russia.

What he suggested was that to ensure safe communication with Sibi and Quetta a line should be made across the Indus from Mooltan to Dera Ghazee Khan, and should proceed thence parallel to the Indus, entirely beyond the reach of any possible consequences of a breach at Kusmore, along the safe side of the Cutchee Plain on the right bank down to Sibi and the foot of the passes opposite Sukkur.

It was in May, 1877, that he submitted this report. It was a remarkable paper, and necessarily excited Lord Lytton's immediate attention, the more so that the anxiety about Cabul was increasing, and the outlook in the case of the Russians being successful in the war then going on with Turkey, by the

capture of Kars or otherwise, might cause very serious complications and difficulties.

The result of this report was that in June Browne was summoned to Simla, where he had hitherto usually felt himself out of touch, but where he now found his brother-in-law Pierson and his old comrade Blair. His report was quickly discussed and approved; and the Viceroy went farther, and, drawing away from railway and turning to frontier and political matters, held discussions with him on them almost daily, Browne living at Government House for a part of the time; which all led to the engineer work, the subject of his report, being assigned to others to deal with, while Browne himself was posted instead to the Foreign Department, as a special officer on Lord Lytton's own staff, but detached temporarily as a political officer—to watch, and report to him direct on the wild tribes lining the Pesheen border; especially one Pathan clan of primary local importance called the "Kakurs." He was, in Lord Lytton's own words, to "keep open the door of the Kakur country."

While Browne was at Simla, there had been a fanatical episode at Quetta, where much engineer work had been going on. Some Ghazees had rushed through the works, and killed one officer and wounded another.

This Kakur work, though it lay actually in Beloochistan, was so much on its northern frontier that Browne was brought into much closer contact with the Pathans there than with the Beloochees generally.

Meanwhile, it may be observed, although it was in Central Asia that the proceedings of the Russians were causing anxiety and being watched in India, the incidents and possibilities of their war with Turkey

were really of primary importance. Lord Salisbury was personally present at Constantinople, and taking part in the Conference there. The comparative gravity of the questions involved may be gathered from the fact that, in the face of all that was going on, the most prominent event that occurred was the Czar's assurance, on his honour, that he had no desire to acquire Constantinople.

Having described Browne's own employment and career during the earlier part of his work in Beloochistan at this period, it is necessary, before we proceed farther with it, to refer to the measures and action of the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, the more especially that, as already noted, his rule was a very personal one and affected his officers very seriously, especially those who had been selected for duties in which he took any personal interest.

It will be remembered that he had taken over the viceroyalty and at once proceeded to Simla in April, 1876. His chief work in that year lay in connection with the Afghan question, and in efforts to induce the Ameer to have an English representative at his court—efforts which, it need hardly be said, failed entirely. But they were still going on when he visited Beloochistan before the end of the year, made a treaty with the Khan, and led him and his chiefs to attend at Delhi on the occasion, on the next New Year's day, of the fête in honour of the proclamation of Her Majesty as Empress of India. During the greater part of 1877 the Afghanistan question was still the all-important political topic; but Lord Lytton, though he apparently thought otherwise, was not making any real way with it, the Ameer never seriously meaning business in the direction desired. Other very grave matters were also occupying him, such as the famine

in Madras and Mysore and the dispatch of Indian troops to Malta, on the outbreak of war between Russia and Turkey. There were troubles also on the frontier, and the Jowaki tribes were being coerced.

The only person besides himself whom he was allowing a potential voice in the conduct of affairs was Colonel Colley; and at this Jowaki business he, a novice, proposed to teach the experienced frontier officers the advantages, of which he held them ignorant, in the use of rifles, muskets, and so forth. He was not disabused of the true merits of the case till he proceeded to wander over the position and suddenly found himself face to face with a very large force of the hill men, who had long been quietly watching the British force (as its officers well knew), but hidden in the broken ground and rocks like Roderick Dhu's warriors.

Lord Lytton had also been devising important, if not crucial, measures—useful, important, and easy enough after the long previous inertness of the Government. One of these was the formation into a new province, and the removal from the Punjab sphere, of all the British trans-Indus territory; and the charge of this was to have been assigned to General (as he was then, but now Field-Marshal Earl) Roberts. He was the Quartermaster-General of the army, and had drawn up a memorandum on frontier questions which had greatly attracted Lord Lytton. But events were then hurrying too fast to enable action to be taken on it, and the specific measure proposed—the formation of a Frontier Province—was postponed till Lord Curzon's rule. This was a matter in which Browne took the deepest interest, as will be seen from his paper on the subject, written not very long before his death.

Some changes were meanwhile taking place or impending both in the official circles and on the Viceroy's staff, and the first change, though a very brief one, was Colley's visit to England. Then the Private Secretary was transferred to the India Office, to which too Sir Henry Norman was shortly posted as a member of the Council. He was a dissentient from most of Lord Lytton's views.

In addition to the few changes that have been mentioned, it must be noted that there was almost a transformation scene in the Inner Council of the more important and trusted officers of Government—the most serious ones, especially in respect of the frontiers, being the prominent positions assigned to Sir Lewis Pelly and to Cavagnari, the former unknown except as a Bombay political officer, and the latter a very vigorous and energetic Punjab frontier officer with soldierly proclivities of the old Edwardes and Nicholson type. Except these and the few other favourites who enjoyed the viceregal confidence, all others were nowhere.

Lord Lytton was now quite satisfied with the watch over the southern borders of Afghanistan; but the dealings with the northern frontier and the threatening aspect of the political outlook there were what was causing him anxiety. While he had been engaged with Afghanistan—that is, in efforts to come to terms with the Ameer—Russia had been making advances towards the same quarter, but with much greater success, and had also been repeating the old rôle of 1854 towards Turkey and the interests of England in that direction. She had declared war with Turkey, and had evidently been expecting a walk over; but Plevna and the genius of the Turkish generals had been a lion in her path, and the strife was now ending, under Lord Salisbury's politic influence in the treaty

of San Stefano. Still the situation there, *i.e.* in the neighbourhood of Turkey, was one of great irritation, especially with the court of Russia.

At the same time, as has been already pointed out, the Russian powers or ministers concerned directly with Turkey and those regions were not those that dealt with Afghanistan—viz. the Turkestan representatives of Russia; who, in fact, acted perfectly independently, in accordance with the practice[1] Lord Palmerston showed to be habitual with them.

During the period 1876–7, with which we have been dealing, the action of Russia had certainly been mainly in the direction of Turkey, as has been shown. But, though no very prominent or glaring steps had yet been taken on the north of Afghanistan, her movement there had been serious, though not easily recognisable. In fact, in that direction she had latterly been blundering to a certain extent, and leaving too large a gap between her two spheres of operation there, Krasnovodsk on the Caspian, and Khiva to the east. But Kaufmann had not been idle in respect of attention to Afghanistan and of measures to correct the situation—a situation which, in the meanwhile, was of momentous advantage to Lord Lytton in giving him breathing time for the necessary counteraction. For "Masterly Inactivity" would no longer answer. Quiet emissaries had already been beginning to appear at Cabul and pave the way for more overt diplomacy, insinuating that the attention of England was fully occupied in the Mediterranean, and that the Ameer was really free to enter on a specific and independent alliance with Russia, for which alliance, Kaufmann, the Governor-General of Turkestan, was, on his part,

[1] Described at page 135.

ready to take immediate steps. Suggestions were made of a formal alliance to be framed as between two potentates. The Ameer was cajoled in a ludicrous manner, treated as a political and military equal, and encouraged to pose as the representative of Islam and to declare a *jehad* (religious war) against the English. But specifically hostile correspondence with England did not begin till the end of 1877, though the Ameer had already shown his temper by taking no notice of the Viceroy's invitation to the Empress Durbar of the previous January. He had become sufficiently arrogant—in contrast with his submissive attitude a few years before—to act as if he were the actual master of the situation, playing off Russia against England; though in his heart he realised, and was annoyed at, the weapon against him which the Russians had at their command, in the presence with them of the rival claimant to the throne of Cabul—his brother Abdurrahman.

In October, 1877, Browne started from Simla in his new position in the Foreign Department and on the personal staff of the Viceroy, for the exceptional political duty of watching the Afghan frontier where occupied by the Kakur Pathans. In accordance with the Viceroy's wishes, his first step was to equip himself thoroughly for the very special diplomacy and varied functions that he would have to carry out—the survey of the district, the watch over the proceedings on the frontier, the acquisition of personal influence with the tribesmen, and the enlisting of their good-will in favour of the British.

To this end he first went to Roorkee, where he provided himself not only with all the astronomical and other instruments and appliances, the serious equipment needed for his surveys, but also with

knicknacks, and cheap watches, and the like, turned out at the workshops there for presents to native gentry and others. Thence he turned his face towards the Kakur frontier, joined there about the end of the month, and never left it, except for Afghan territory, till the first part of the Afghan war was ended and he was no longer wanted for it.

For this new and novel task of keeping open the door of the Kakur country no *specific* orders or instructions were given to Browne, except that he was not to cross the frontier into it. But there was no doubt as to the results aimed at, and the understanding that he was to effect them by his own wits. He was therefore given a free hand.

His object, then, as already explained, was to be the acquisition of such influence with the Kakurs specially, and with the wild and independent tribes generally beyond our frontier in that direction, and the winning of such regard and confidence from them, that in the event of war or troubles with Afghanistan they would be friendly towards us, and at least refrain from siding against us or molesting us. He was to win the personal regard of their chiefs, so as to sway their action in the impending crisis; he was to effect this not only without crossing the frontier, but also without showing any desire to do so or to meddle with them.

These Kakurs were not Beloochees, but Pathans, like the Afreedees and Ghilzyes with whom he had to do in his early days, very passionate and fanatical. From his special aptitude and his command of their language (Pushtoo) he had then won their confidence and acquired exceptional influence. He hoped to do the same now, adopting the same methods and *bonhomie*, the same frank and fearless heartiness, and making

the most of his being the only British officer there who could speak their language. The clan was a very large and powerful one, much larger than the Afreedees —and this they had to be, to hold their own, for the Beloochee tribes in immediate contact with them, such as the Murrees and Bhoogtees, were also very large and powerful, and more brave and warlike.

But his task lay not merely in connection with the Kakurs, but with the frontier and neighbouring districts generally, in getting all the information he could, and in the best ways he could, surveying, exploring, disguising himself if need be, and so forth; and it was for these ends that he had been so careful before starting for the work to collect the needful instruments and articles for presents from Roorkee and elsewhere. Disguises were taken, in compliance with specific orders; but he rarely, if ever, used them, and had no faith in them.

To take up this appointment he travelled from Mooltan by Dera Ghazee Khan and Hurrund and the skirts of the Kakur country up to Dadur; thence through the Bolan Pass to Quetta; and finally returned to Dadur and took a brief run to Khelat, the capital. This gave him that further knowledge of the topography of the district which he felt to be essential for the work that was probably before him, in regard not merely to the Kakurs, but also to his relations with other tribes, and the probability of local disturbances and operations in the event of hostilities with Afghanistan. He had also, he felt, gained such insight as was necessary into local and secret politics and the causes of the outbreaks and feuds to which there seemed to be so great a tendency.

A circumstance that at once pleased him greatly, and led him to hope that there might be plain sailing

after all, was the kindly help and support he received from Colonel Sandeman, the G.G.A. (Governor-General's Agent). The two seemed to be in entire agreement; and these cordial relations remained unabated throughout their residence in Beloochistan till Sandeman died there in harness in 1892, and, as will be seen, was succeeded by Browne.

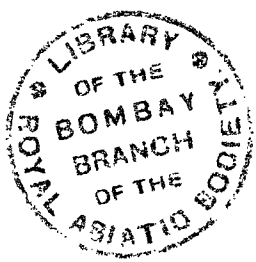
To turn now to the management of the Kakurs, the primary object of his mission. His method in dealing with them, as he was forbidden to cross the borders, was in the first place to avoid all obtrusiveness, but in the next to allow them easy and free access to his own camp and tent, to establish such a *camaraderie* as they would understand, to entertain their chiefs whenever they appeared, and to avoid all outward precautions and signs of distrust. So they walked in and out as they pleased, exchanged pinches of snuff, and talked freely with him. Also, when carrying out work at Quetta and elsewhere, he was careful to attract these Kakurs to it, and pay them well; and in general to establish pleasant and influential relations with them. In order to do all this steadily and effectively he had to live in camp on those borders for more than a year, which, needless to say, involved risk, exposure, and privation. There was but little of incident to record, but the result was entire success, as these two facts will indicate.

(1) When war eventually broke out a year afterwards, instead of being the deadly enemies of the English as had been expected, the Kakurs never, throughout the whole campaign, fired a shot against the advancing troops, or annoyed them at all from Sibi to Khwaja Amran.

(2) They, further, deliberately and strongly and of their own motion informed the Ameer that we had

treated them so well that not a Kakur would join against us.

Thus was accomplished the special task for which Browne had been deputed to this frontier, and, in addition, as he knew it to be desired, he had acquired such local knowledge, and shown such aptitude for dealing with these tribes and for the duties of a political officer, that Lord Lytton kept him there for employment in that capacity in case of the outbreak of war.


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CHAPTER XI

EVE OF THE AFGHAN WAR: 1877–8

KEEPING OPEN THE KAKUR DOOR—THE MULLAH EPISODE AGAIN—RUSSIAN INTRIGUES—THE AMEER'S PROCEEDINGS—LORD LYTTON'S MEASURES.

WITH the advance of time the political situation was now approaching a crisis, not on this southern frontier of Afghanistan, but in the north; and, as will be shown, Lord Lytton was specially concerned therewith. But, on this southern frontier, Browne was now comparatively free from his original task of special attention to the Kakurs, and able consequently to devote himself more to the demands of the military situation, as connected with the political prospects; and Lord Lytton fully continued his confidence and trust in him, in the somewhat altered and more critical duties which he would have now to undertake—duties which would naturally include military and engineer work as well as political watch. This was in full conformity to what was going on at Simla and elsewhere.

Colonel Sandeman was of course the chief political and administrative officer on the spot, and there were select military officers present for the conduct of the military preparations. But the real inquisition into the general preparations and arrangements needed was conducted at Simla. Sir Andrew Clarke had

already been recently in the Beloochistan direction, and had taken the initiative in furthering the efficiency of the roads and railroads, to such an extent as was in his power, against the coming crisis. Lord Lytton, determined to have every assistance of value that he could command, and having already his recognised Council at hand, had further summoned to his Councils, from leave in England, Sir Richard Strachey, Sir John's brother, who had formerly been the head of the Public Works Department, and also, besides Sir Lewis Pelly already on the spot, Major St. John, who had more intimate knowledge than any one else of the country from Quetta to Candahar and onwards, and who, as will be seen presently, was to return to Quetta when the war broke out and to resume his political functions with the southern army there.

It may be observed that while Browne had been watching the Kakurs in accordance with specific orders, in order to influence them for the crisis now impending, he had been extending that watch to other tribes in their neighbourhood, not only with the same object of friendliness, but in view of more practical ends, and had spent a couple of months in the district of the Murree tribes, during which he was quite alone. The general result of all this vigorous and judicious action was now beginning to develop when the crisis was about to arise. For he found himself able to arrange for the frontier engineering and preparations with a facility he had hardly dared to expect. This was to a large extent due to the presence in considerable numbers of some of his former gangers and workmen on the Peshawur frontier, chiefly tribesmen of the Ghilzye clan. These, a few at first, had gradually increased in numbers, so as to form a Coolie Corps, if not a sort of Pioneer Brigade. From

their exceptional discipline, they could also be relied on not only for mere manual labour, but for postal and other auxiliary duties as well. They proved especially valuable in the Khojak Pass and other points in the subsequent march to Candahar and Khelat-i-Ghilzie. This advantage, however, was curiously supplemented by the "Mullah" idea derived from Browne's "double." While peace was not yet broken, the rumour, traced to the Ghilzyes, began to spread that Browne was not really a British officer at all, but an Afghan Mullah who was playing a part. It may be said at once that this rumour and conviction grew steadily and lasted, and was stronger than ever at the time of his death in 1896. But it was only now, in the course of Browne's presence and prominence near Quetta and the Kakur country, that the native rumours about his being a priest or Mahomedan in disguise began to be definitely disseminated.

Browne, it will be remembered, had not been on the Peshawur frontier or near Pathans or Ghilzyes since 1864; but on now appearing in the Cutchee Plain and the Pesheen and Kakur borders, his old familiarity with Pushtoo, the Pathan vernacular, had put him at once on an exceptionally cordial and intimate footing with the Ghilzyes and other Pathans from Afghanistan itself; and, as already noted, he almost immediately began to find himself looked at and regarded and treated in quite an exceptional manner—being addressed as a brother Mussulman and as a Mullah; and his disavowals were replied to as a matter to be readily understood, and due to secret motives.

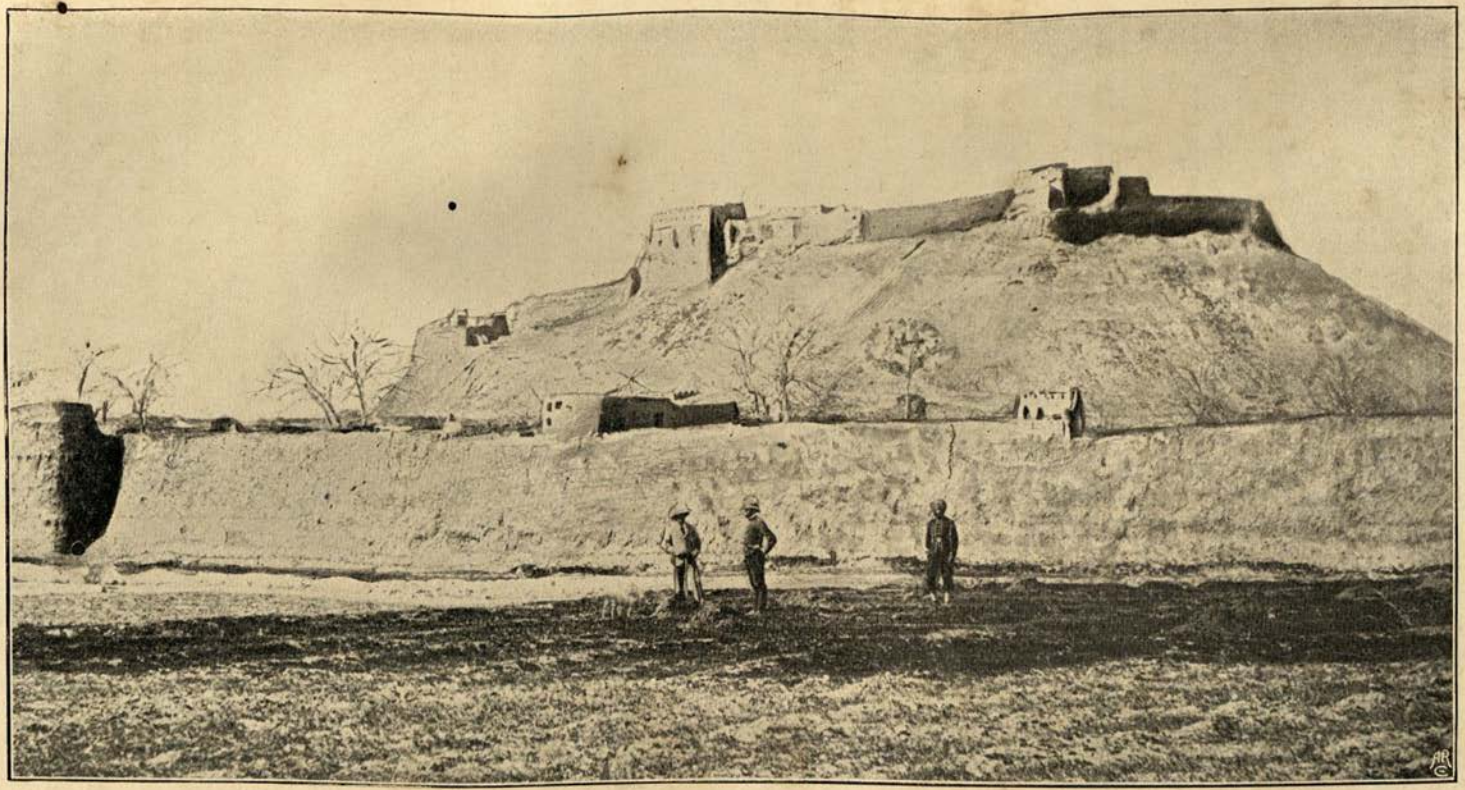
There does not seem to be any reason for supposing that Browne either then or ever at any time realised the true facts of the case, though it is not

at all unlikely that he guessed at the possibility of there being a quasi-Mullah existing of English origin, possibly a child left behind in the former Afghan war, and now become a naturalised Afghan. He used sometimes to hint at the possibility of a Russian spy.

Later on, when the crisis in the Afghanistan direction began to get more acute, preparatory measures were carried on with greater vigour. These were, of course, chiefly in the hands of the officers of the Engineer and Military Departments, but they were not sorry to have in the Political Department the assistance of so vigorous a colleague as Browne; and so he was now working hard at clearing roads, improving defences, increasing the shelter for troops, and so on, and especially examining the ground where the advance and its flank would lie, and planning the necessary preparatory measures.

It was while he was so engaged at Quetta itself, and busied with the strengthening of the Miri, as the Quetta fort is called, that his attention, and that of his companion Colonel Fellowes, were drawn to a seeming Afghan who was sitting resting on the road-side, but whose extraordinary resemblance to Browne struck them both suddenly and simultaneously, so as to cause a loud exclamation.

This leads to the next phase of the story of the Mullah, "Ishmael Ali," the Englishman, whom we last left settled down to quiet family life at Mukkur, near Lake Abistade. His repose had not lasted long. After an interval events began to occur which recalled him to the Ameer's memory, so presently he was summoned to Cabul. The reason for this was that two Russian officers had recently arrived there, and the Ameer desired Ishmael to find out what they



THE MIRI—THE QUETTA FORT.

[*To face p.* 170.

really wanted to do. But they seemed to be mere ordinary spies, without any more definite purposes or powers. The next occasion was later on in 1876, when the Ameer again summoned him to Cabul, but this time told him that troubles with the English were impending and that he wished him to go to Quetta and find out how the land lay there. He duly departed, and as he went onward he learned that the southern tribes, Ghilzyes and Kakurs, were irritated by some fresh imposts which the Ameer had levied on them. He felt and foresaw more and more difficulty as he got nearer the border. So he there buried his passport at a spot where he knew he could readily find it again, went on to Quetta and Shikarpore, and, after completing his inquiries, returned with his information to Cabul, laid it before the Ameer, and warned him strongly, it is believed, as to the real state of affairs and the disaffection towards him. He was again sent to Quetta, more than once, it is thought, and on his last visit in 1878 saw and recognised Browne and with him another of his friends of former days, Major Fellowes. He was interrogated by them, but gave no practical information.

He had been desired to stop and be interviewed; but he had at once seen that the game was up, and had made up his mind to drop this career forthwith, as it could not be safely continued any longer. So he quietly and at once disappeared; and instead of returning to Cabul, proceeded straight off to Sukkur, and thence to Kurrachee and Bombay, and was not again heard of. He sent no communication to his family or friends at Mukkur. His absence was such a common occurrence that it created no surprise, and at his home it was at once accounted

for by the rumour that he had been seen at Quetta, posing as an English officer. This occurrence, the last visit of Ishmael Ali to Quetta, must have been about the time of Lord Lytton's mission to the Ameer, which was stopped at the entrance to the Khyber.

This closed our Mullah's actual career in the name and character, which he had adopted after the Umbeyla days, of Ishmael Ali—first a traveller, than a *hajee*, and finally the Mullah of Mukkur; while all the while an ex-British officer. But, far from the supposed Mullah losing his old position of sanctity and weight, it became more confirmed than ever in spirit, though changed in body. It happened in this wise. The Ghilzyes and others had probably been somewhat tantalised occasionally, so long as it might be alleged that one Mullah was alive and well at Mukkur, and another, at the same time, about Quetta, but it does not appear that any one ever saw the Mullah at Mukkur after he thought he had seen him at Quetta. Now, however, after Ishmael Ali's departure from India there was no further doubt. The Mullah was no longer to be seen at Mukkur, while he seemed very prominent at Quetta. Hence was confirmed the reverence with which Browne was regarded by these devoted Ghilzyes and the immunity from Ghazee attacks which made him an exception among the Feringhees.

Further, it will be presently seen that from the belief that he was their Mullah, the people of Mukkur and emissaries from the family there began to arrive in search of him, in order to ascertain what his plans and wishes "really" were; and in fact they continued to be in touch and to communicate with him throughout his career up to its very close.

Again, while watching the Kakurs, Browne's influence with the wild Pathan tribes in general was felt to be exceptionally great, and later on to be due in a measure to some special cause, such as the above rumour, besides his facility with their language, his knowledge of their ways and modes of thought, and his hearty and manly *bonhomie*. Latterly, as that rumour spread, and especially in the case of the Ghilzyes, their bearing to him had become so singular and marked and devoted in manner that it was quite certain that they were beginning to regard him as a mystery—to believe that he was playing a part, that he was not really a British officer, but a co-religionist, a Mullah from the north, an emissary in disguise and a leader to be implicitly obeyed. He had disparaged the Ameer to them, and in this they were quite ready to agree with him, for the Ameer had been coercing these southern clans, and especially the Ghilzyes, in regard to tributes and revenue. Latterly the rumour became quite specific, and was widely spread and looked on as a fact, that he had been identified as the Mullah who had recently frequented the Mukkur district near Lake Abistade, but had now disappeared from there; who was a *hajee*, having performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, and was one of the holiest of holy men. All efforts to deny the soft impeachment were now futile. Their manner was, "We quite understand you. Play your part: command us: we obey you." And such was the situation when the Afghan war began.

This story of Ishmael Ali as being Browne's double used for some time to be looked on as a fable, based on Browne's partiality to the Ghilzyes and his singular aptitude in regard to their language, songs, and

customs. But it was fully corroborated by Browne's own narration of the circumstances connected with it.

Meanwhile, it must not be supposed that this chance incident of the great likeness between Browne and the Mullah of Mukkur is not perfectly apart from the notable influence which he exercised over the Ghilzye and other Pathan and Afreedee tribes from the first days of his frontier work in 1860. This affair was additional and of much later date. His habits and *camaraderie* and influence with them in those early days, sixteen years before his Kakur work and the Mullah story, have been already described, and a few more traits may be added. The wildest, most cut-throat-looking creatures would follow him like a dog for years seeking employment. One of them protected his eldest son in an occasion of danger, and in no instance was it ever known that his trust in them was betrayed. All this is quite apart from the Mullah case.

The first instance of the identity being asserted occurred shortly after Ishmael Ali's disappearance, when some ten Ghilzye head-men, with followers, came into Quetta, seeking for help against the Ameer. They were men from Mukkur and Lake Abistade, Ishmael Ali's home, and they all proceeded forthwith to claim Browne's acquaintance as a neighbour and a Mahomedan. His denial of it they treated as a joke, and quite to be understood; and he raised no objection, as their recognition, though mistaken, might be of use.

The most important of these chiefs was one Adam Khan. He was very ill, and died in three or four days, but very suddenly, of fever; and his followers at once interviewed Browne, and asked him to perform a special burial service for the old man, with certain

rites called the *Namaz Jenaza*, for which they select the holiest priest they can get hold of. To this application, however, Browne gave an explicit refusal, but apparently in such a manner as served only to confirm their impression.

So far Browne's own proceedings and the Mullah episode so strangely involved with his career have been related; but the immediate future was so completely dependent on other public occurrences—on our own north-west frontier in Afghanistan, in Turkestan, in Russia, and in Eastern Europe—and Browne was watching them so eagerly and sedulously, that these must now be dealt with, but as briefly as possible. The proceedings of Russia must first be described — proceedings which, as before explained, were in two spheres, apparently independent of each other, but, in fact, so intimately connected as to be practically one operation. While the Czar and his own court were playing one game in Europe, and especially in Turkey, Kaufmann and his officers were stirring up Afghanistan and Turkestan; and the astute Skobeleff was guiding in both those directions.

In the west, as has already been shown, Russia had been engaged in war with Turkey, but the treaty of San Stefano, on March 3rd, 1877, had ended it; while, on the other hand, this had left her relations with England more strained than ever, especially as Indian troops were being collected at Malta. In that direction, however, nothing hostile of any importance occurred, though much that may be described as "snarling" went on till the Berlin Conference was concluded by the treaty of 1878.

In the east, on the other hand, much aggressive action of importance was occurring. A document,

of the greatest gravity, which had been prepared the previous year now saw the light—a scheme, drawn up by Skobeleff, for an invasion of India from the north. This scheme is more fully shown in the work noted below,[1] but its salient points were these: It was based on the view that all India was hostile to the English rule, that the approach of an enemy to the frontier in any serious strength would certainly lead to a general rebellion, and that the large army of Turkestan, freed from hostilities there, swelled by the innumerable horsemen of Central Asia, and co-operating with the Afghans, would join the Indian rebels, wipe out the English, and repeat the old histories of the acquisition of India.

In full accordance with this scheme, but apparently quite independently of it, Kaufmann continued his preparations and movements towards Afghanistan, the initial steps of which have been already mentioned. He had cajoled the Ameer into the idea of an alliance, and had now begun to dispatch to him Stoletoff and other emissaries with powers to conclude negotiations with him on such points as these:

The location of Russian agents at Cabul.

The location of Russian troops on the Afghan frontier.

The construction of roads to Cabul, Herat, and Candahar, and of corresponding lines of telegraph.

The free passage of Russian troops through Afghanistan and assistance to them in the matter of food and transport.

At the same time, through Stoletoff's agency, another agent, named Pashino, was sent to India itself to sow the seeds of rebellion; but he was caught

[1] *Russia's March towards India.* By an Indian Officer. Vol. II.

at Peshawur, sent down country, and deported to Russia.

The further story is too well known to need repetition—how the Ameer ostentatiously made much of Kaufmann's emissaries till news arrived of the Berlin treaty, when they bade their adieux and returned to Turkestan before the end of the year, leaving their deluded victim in the lurch to face by himself the English enemy whom they had led him to challenge.

Further, while they had been taking time by the forelock, and placing a petard, so to speak, at our very gate, to enforce an opening, they had been active in larger and more widespread preparations. An order had been issued for the organisation of three columns for the invasion of India from Central Asia, from Samarkand, Margelan, and Petro-Alexandrovosk as starting points. But before the projected movements were begun, the Berlin treaty came in the way and stopped the whole business.

It may here be pointed out as a corollary to Lord Palmerston's account of Russian practice that the officers of the Czar were in a very happy position —they had simply to carry out orders, were not troubled by scruples of conscience as to the means by which success was achieved, were glorified by any success, and if they had carried out orders were not set aside on failure—a contrast to the fate of most English officers, who under similar circumstances would generally have to retire into quiet obscurity.

The Ameer Shere Ali was, of course, the prominent figure—may he not be called the victim?—of the embroglio—the victim, that is, of Russian aggressiveness and of our vacillating policy There could

not be a heartier ally than he had been to us in Lord Mayo's days, but with our changed demeanour and aloofness during Lord Northbrook's *régime* on the one hand, combined with Russia's ostentatious friendliness and temptations on the other, his fears got the better of him, and he turned from cold, unsympathetic England to the blandishments of the wily tricksters of Russia.

By the time of Lord Lytton's arrival he had really cast in his lot in the other direction, and had become quite impracticable. The new Viceroy soon saw this, and, as has been shown, made his preparations for the eventualities he foresaw, while omitting no reasonable effort to bring the Ameer into a proper course.

At the same time, this much must, in justice, be said for the Ameer—he was at one alike with his predecessors and with his eventual successors in insisting on the inadvisability and danger of a British representative, resident at Cabul; for whose safety he felt he would be responsible, as was soon proved by the case of the ill-fated Cavagnari.

His admitting Stoletoff to Cabul is quite another matter. He recognised that he would never be responsible for his safety as he would have to be for that of the British Resident—and there was an absurd contrast in their demeanour between the two powers with whom he had to deal.

Unfortunately, at this juncture, in August, the Ameer lost his favourite son, the young Abdulla Jan, and, on the ground of the gravity of the blow, he declined to receive any deputations or to deal with any important business, though he practically showed the falsity of this attitude by continuing his interviews with the Russian delegates who were

still at Cabul. The *dénouement* is well known. The British mission duly reached Peshawur; but on moving forwards towards Cabul was at Jumrood refused admittance to the Khyber Pass—and the Afghan war ensued in November, after every reasonable effort had been made to avoid or avert it.

It may be added that, whilst settling on the immediate advance to Ali Musjid and the Khyber on the north, Lord Lytton wrote to Quetta suggesting the sending of Browne thence to the Ghilzye country, supported by the clansmen already at Quetta, in order to arrange about utilising the clan in British interests. On this point, any movement of Browne personally into the Ghilzye (Afghan) country was not possible, and could not be contemplated. But what Browne did was to collect and keep under his eye large bodies of that clan as personal followers, emissaries for information, and quasi-companies of Pioneers for military labour; and most valuable they proved in the impending operations.

To turn now to Lord Lytton. As matters stood, it was hopeless for him to bring about those relations at Cabul which had been one of the main features of the special aim or mission for which he had been appointed to India. It did not affect Browne's career that there were fluctuations or changes in the steps by which the Viceroy tried to effect that mission; but, of course, he was watching those steps with the keenest zest, in charge as he was of the sister steps, to the same end, on the southern frontier.

On hearing of the Ameer's reception of Stoletoff, Lord Lytton had determined to send to him a British mission, first intimating to him its special object—a treaty to be entered into that should put the mutual relations on a sound footing, on three important

points. This mission he arranged to place under the leading of Sir Neville Chamberlain, whom he knew to be a *persona grata* to the Ameer. And the home Government fully approved of these measures.

This mission duly proceeded to Peshawur, arrived there on September 12th, and then halted till the arrangements for its farther advance should be completed. The local Afghan commander notified that he could not allow any advance without the Ameer's specific sanction, and after much delay none was ever received at all; but in the meanwhile Chamberlain and Cavagnari continued negotiations with the quasi-independent tribes that occupied the Khyber Pass. At this stage, the Viceroy too still seemed to receive no practical answers from the Ameer, who, on the other hand, was steadily occupying or strengthening his own positions in the Pass, and had at length punished some of the Khyberee chiefs for communicating with the English.

Unfortunately the home Government did not give Lord Lytton a free hand, but shilly-shallied; which strengthened the Ameer's attitude. But at length the Viceroy was allowed to act; whereupon he withdrew the mission forthwith, and on November 2nd wrote in stern and clear language to the Ameer. His letter was an ultimatum; and in a few days he received from England specific permission to invade Afghanistan on November 21st, if a satisfactory answer had not then been received.

On receipt of this sanction Lord Lytton at once began to take preliminary measures for the operations that would probably be advisable in the event of war; and these measures were, of course, keenly watched by Browne, though they affected himself only partially on that southern district.

For the operations were to be in three lines—two in the north towards Cabul, and the third in the south towards Candahar, which alone directly concerned Browne. The two in the north were to be one from Peshawur under Sir Samuel Browne, through the Khyber and Jellalabad, and the other from the Kurum Valley under General Roberts, through the Shuturgurdun route, having first to seize and dominate the Khost country. The Candahar column was to be eventually under Sir Donald Stewart, but, until his arrival from England, under General Biddulph.

CHAPTER XII

THE AFGHAN WAR: 1878–9

START OF THE AFGHAN WAR—BROWNE WITH SIR DONALD STEWART'S FORCE—ENTRY INTO CANDAHAR—KHELAT-I-GHILZIE AND GIRISHK—STEWART'S MEMORANDUM ON THE STRATEGICAL AND POLITICAL VALUE OF CANDAHAR—THUL CHOTIALI EXPEDITION.

THE preceding chapter saw three columns under preparation for a simultaneous advance into Afghanistan—from Peshawur, from the Kurum Valley, and from Quetta respectively.

Browne was, of course, to be with the Quetta force, and his functions were to be numerous and not restricted to the customary post of engineer. He was to retain his position as member of the Viceroy's personal staff and of the Foreign and Political Department. And, as directly enjoined by Lord Lytton, he was to aim at authority and leadership with the tribesmen of the great Ghilzye clan. This charge was all the more prominent that Browne's success in his political mission to the Kakurs was now bearing fruit. There was no delay on the part of that clan in announcing to the Ameer that they would not join him in any hostilities with the English; and so marked was their attitude that Major Sandeman, the Governor-General's Agent, organised a body-guard of those clansmen as his personal escort.

It will be easily understood that at this period, when the war was about to begin, there was absolute uncertainty as to what would occur, even at the very first. The Ameer had his troops all as ready as he could have them at the three points we menaced—at the mouth of the Khyber about Ali Musjid, at the Peiwar Kotul and the passes in the Kurum range, and at Candahar and the Khojak and Khwaja hills opposite Quetta. The Russian emissaries too—*i.e.* Kaufmann's—were still with him as if in his support, though their chief Stoletoff had left for, avowedly, only a brief absence.

All this Russian attitude, however, be it remembered, was sheer trickery; and no ally was more deliberately and wantonly deserted, betrayed, and left in the lurch than the unfortunate Ameer; for the treaty of Berlin had long been signed, as the Russians knew, though not the Ameer—and the Russian Government itself even before that epoch had not only withdrawn from any hostile attitude towards England, but had entered into a direct but secret treaty with us for unity of action. So now, but not until the Ameer was fully committed to war, did the Russian emissaries withdraw and leave him to face us single-handed. The Russians at Cabul had known of the treaty in ample time to guide the Ameer, had they desired to do so, into a proper attitude towards England; but obviously the Turkestan party were bent on bringing on a war between England and Afghanistan.

It has been mentioned that the plan prescribed for this invasion was the simultaneous crossing of the frontier by three columns, but a glance at the map will show the difference in the distances that these columns would have to march, to reach the three

points of advance assigned to them—the Khyber, the Kurum, and Pesheen in front of Quetta. Hence it arose that, in order to carry out the proper concert in dates, General Biddulph had to start the advance or movement from Quetta before the arrival of the proper commander, Sir Donald Stewart, and of the second division of the force. That column naturally suffered severely from the great distance of its seat of operations from its real base at Mooltan, where the depots were formed for the troops and munitions of war and special supplies; and, further, that very much greater distance, combined with the rough and bare character of the country, tended to make the matter of carriage and transport exceptionally serious.

But now, in accordance with the plan that the advance of the three forces into Afghanistan should be all made simultaneously on November 21st, the invasion from Peshawur into the Khyber was carried out under Sir Samuel Browne (no relation, though a namesake of *Buster*), that into the Kurum under General Roberts, and that from Quetta into Pesheen by Biddulph's force. And to this party Browne was at first attached, but afterwards to Sir Donald's whole force.

It is not necessary to describe in detail the northern operations of the war, for our Browne—*Buster* Browne—was not concerned with them; but we do so briefly. General Samuel Browne's force attacked and captured Ali Musjid on November 21st, and forthwith occupied the Khyber and other passes *en route*—thence to Jellalabad. And Roberts on the same date entered and occupied the Khost district; then attacked and captured the Peiwar Kotul position on December 2nd, and on the 8th seized the Shuturgurdun and neighbouring heights, whence he could see the sur-

roundings of Cabul, but where his first operations were to clear and obtain effective control over the immediate neighbourhood.

But the task before Stewart and Biddulph's force was to make a long march, through barren and mountainous districts and the Khojak and other difficult passes, to Candahar; and there, whatever else they might do, command the junction of the routes north-east to Cabul and north-west to Herat, so as to intercept any support that the Ameer might have thought of obtaining from outside his north-west frontiers. But the Ameer did not wait for the full development of the war, knowing well what its course would now be; and forthwith, after the Ali Musjid business, he appointed his son, Yakoob Khan, his Regent, and left the country by the mountain tracks for Turkestan with the avowed object of seeking the support of Russia. Henceforward, the Ameer Shere Ali disappears from this story.

On the stoppage of Chamberlain's mission at the mouth of the Khyber, Major St. John had returned to his former position, in political charge of the line from Quetta to Candahar and the south-west border of Afghanistan, and Browne was formally appointed Intelligence Officer to General Biddulph, in addition to the other posts and to carrying out the several other duties that have been described. The Viceroy's specific proposal, already mentioned, that Browne should deal with the Ghilzyes, shows conclusively how fully and pertinently Lord Lytton understood his special authority and influence with the clan; but it must be remarked that he cannot have realised the grounds on which that power was based.

It was on November 9th that General Biddulph, with a portion, some 6,400 men and 16 guns, of the

Candahar Field Force, reached Quetta, and afterwards pushed on to Pesheen. Then, after some days, Sir Donald Stewart reached Dadur *en route* from Mooltan to Quetta. He had been on furlough, and had now come out hurriedly. He had first gone to Simla for some special information and arrangements, and now, on reaching Dadur in the Belooch Plain, overtook the second column of his force in somewhat serious difficulties, owing to the supplies collected there for both of his columns having been all used up by the first column of it under Biddulph.

In this district the first steps in the contest with the Ameer's followers had been taken, it may be here explained, before either of the generals had arrived. Some Afghan emissaries, supported of course by an armed following, had come to the village of Haramzye about fourteen miles from Quetta, and were there intriguing and stirring up mischief. Sandeman, on hearing of this, and ascertaining by a personal visit how the land lay, arranged for action. A force, consisting of an infantry regiment, a troop of cavalry, and two mountain guns, accompanied by Browne, proceeded under Sandeman's guidance to the village. They reached it shortly before daybreak, carefully and quietly surrounded it, and then, with a shout from the whole party, from all sides rushed inwards on its centre, paralysed the malcontents, and seized, handcuffed, and carried off the Ameer's emissary. This feat settled and quieted the whole neighbourhood, and paved the way for Biddulph's operations. The villagers and Syuds of Haramzye, the site of the story, turned into staunch friends, and rendered good service to the British.

On Biddulph's approach—in fact, on knowing of the imminence of an impending war—Sandeman had

begun to lay in supplies along his proposed route; and then Biddulph himself reached Quetta on November 9th with seven battalions of infantry, three regiments of cavalry, and three batteries, one field and two mountain, and found Browne hard at work fortifying the Miri, as the fort at Quetta is called. On the 13th, four days afterwards, Biddulph received orders to prepare for an advance, and during the course of the week reconnoitred the whole of the frontier line, which, as yet, he was not empowered to cross. Browne found his brother officers Bisset and Nicholson[1] on Biddulph's staff. With Nicholson he was much associated afterwards, as they were together first on Biddulph's staff in his march through Thul Chotiali, then on Macpherson's staff in Egypt, and later on, on Lord Roberts's staff when he was Commander-in-chief in India.

Though Sir Donald Stewart had not yet arrived, Biddulph was now beginning to advance; and, after the reconnaissance of November 22nd, crossed the border into Pesheen next day simultaneously with the movement of the two northern columns. He then moved on carefully to Hykulzye and to other points from which to start work at the two passes in the Khwaja Amran range, the Gwaja and the Khojak; of which two the Khojak fell specially to Browne's lot, and there he set his Ghilzyes to help.

Meanwhile General Stewart arrived, and collected his whole force—one rear division, called the first, he commanded personally; the other, the leading division, called the second, remained ahead under Biddulph.

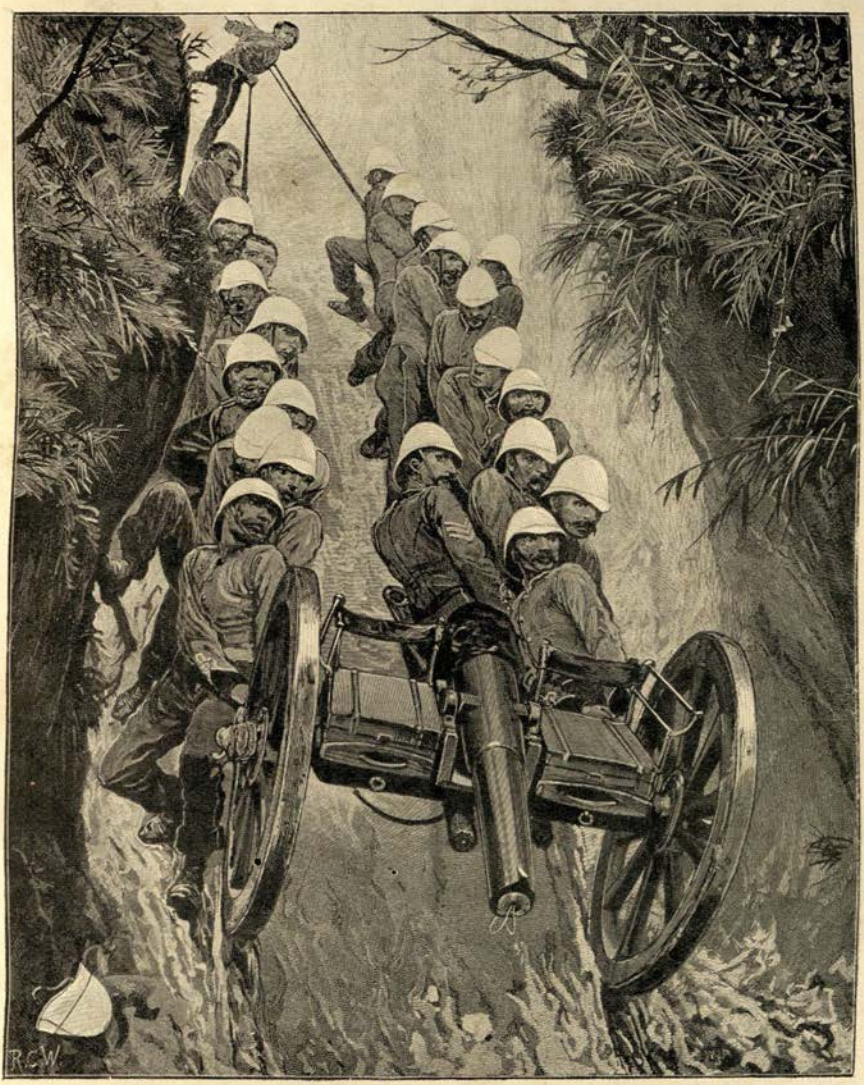
By dint of hard and judicious and well-organised labour, and fortunately without any molestation to speak of from the enemy, the road through each of the

[1] Now Sir W. G. Nicholson

passes referred to was constructed, fit for the passage of all traffic. The charge of the construction lay in the hands of Colonel Sankey and the Engineers under him. But Browne helped him with his Ghilzyes, and was further useful in getting in supplies through them, and in surveying and mapping the sites of various peaks and other features of the country; which was very helpful to the reconnoitring officers. The two roads when completed were each thirteen feet wide, with a maximum gradient of one in ten, and by them now went the first trains of wheeled vehicles that had ever reached Khorasan from India.

The main difficulty on the route to Candahar lay in the obstruction of the Khwaja Amran mountain range which lay across the whole of the plateau that would have to be traversed. There were but two passes in it—those that have been referred to as the Khojak and the Gwaja—the routes to them being by Hykulzye and Gulistan Karez respectively, and there being no other or more direct communication between them than by those two points at their respective heads. They were themselves impassable except to mules, donkeys, and men on foot. The whole country was barren and devoid of supplies, and to a great extent of water; the people were wild and bigoted; and one large clan, the Achukzyes, had avowed their hostile intentions on any suitable opportunity arising.

On the other hand, the Ghilzye clan, the largest of all, were always *en évidence*, and announced their intention to follow Browne's leading on all occasions. He was now at the very height of his influence with them, and was forming them into auxiliary bodies for practical purposes, such as trained working gangs of all sorts—postmen, guides, messengers, collectors of supplies, and so forth. The Kakurs too were



CROSSING THE KHOJAK PASS.

From a drawing by Mr. R. Caton Woodville, reproduced by permission of the Artist and the Proprietors of "The Illustrated London News."

[*To face p.* 188.

helpful; and personally he was absolutely sure of freedom from any risks from fanatics or others.

Between the two parallel passes, as has been noted, there was no communication except by the posts above them; but there was no enemy there now, and no other obstruction. The passage of them by the troops occupied from the 19th to the end of December, General Stewart's orders being that the first division should march through the Gwaja Pass, the second simultaneously through the Khojak, and that the whole should then concentrate at Tukht-i-pul. Each of the divisions, on reaching the plains, and while *en route* to Tukht-i-pul, encountered small bodies of the enemy's cavalry, and driving them inwards, brought them into a position where Brigadier Luck was able to attack and disperse them. The two bodies of British cavalry who were separately pursuing the enemy came in sight of each other, without either of them at first recognising the other to be friends, and not foes; the result being a volley from one of them which sent a bullet through Browne's helmet! This seems to have been the only bit of fighting seen before the force reached Candahar; and it did not promise much as to any really steady resistance. Further, the news now arrived that the Afghans' commander and troops at Candahar had evacuated the place and fled. Hence on January 8th Sir Donald Stewart was able to make a peaceful and triumphant march of ceremony through that city; after which the camp of the force was formed outside it on the Ghuznee side, and enjoyed a few days' repose.

The strategical value of the Candahar position has been already explained, and as Afghan troops were occupying Herat in one direction and Khelat-i-Ghilzie in the other, on the way to Cabul, General Stewart

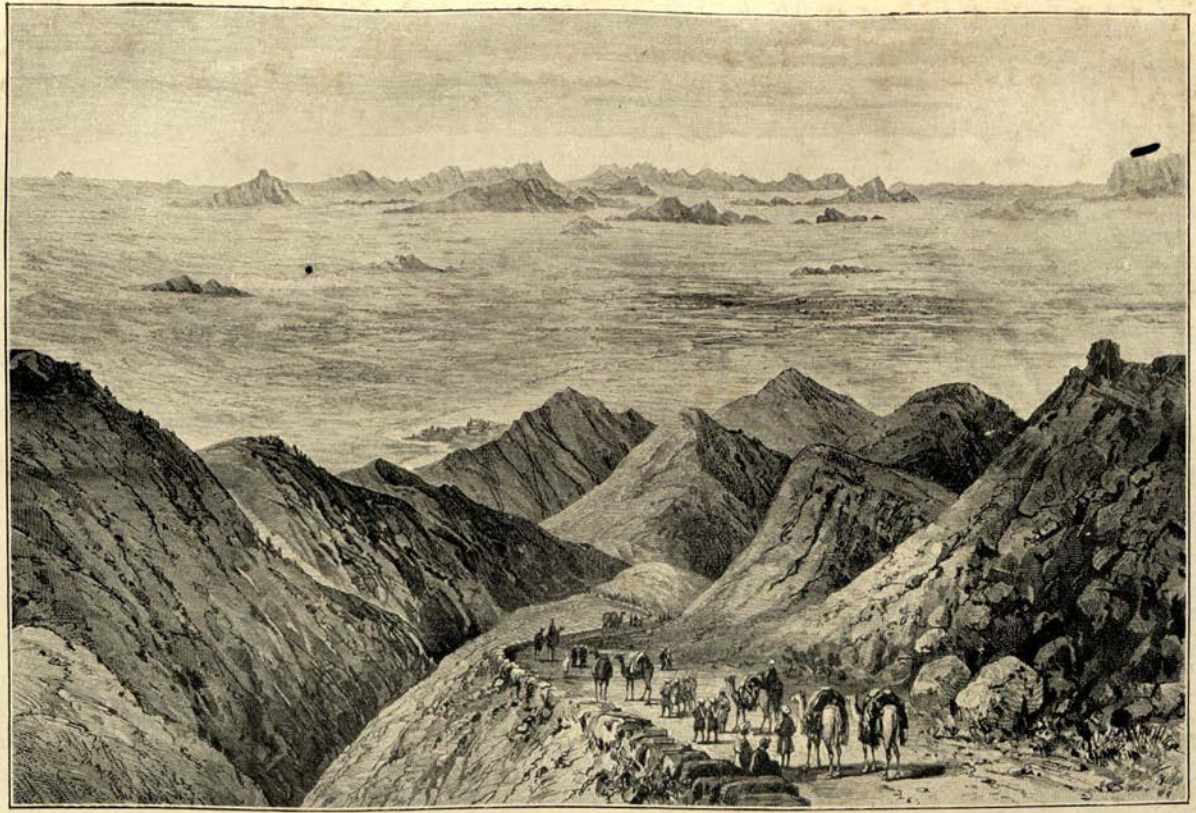
had now to act in both these directions. So pulling his force together, and taking advantage of the approach of a division of Bombay troops, for the garrisoning of Candahar, he began his advances on the 15th, after a week's halt. He sent Biddulph with one division towards Girishk on the Helmund, on the road to Herat, while he led another himself towards Khelat-i-Ghilzie. He took Browne with him as his political officer, and sent St. John with Biddulph.

As Browne accompanied Stewart's column, its incidents will be first described; the more especially since the events of this march were very exceptional in respect of the results of Browne's presence, and the special influence he exercised over the Ghilzyes.

The column, having started on the 15th, came to its camping-ground, a march short of Khelat-i-Ghilzie, on the morning of January 21st. There the force was to halt for the day, and prepare for the advance next day against the fortress.

Browne, however, when reconnoitring ahead and scouting about with his escort and his Ghilzye followers, found a considerable party of those tribesmen there in a somewhat excited state, who proceeded to tell him that the commander and garrison of Khelat-i-Ghilzie—having heard of his approach, and believing him to be the Mullah, anxious to occupy the fort with the force to which, for whatever reason, he had attached himself—were already taking steps to evacuate it the next night. That garrison, they added, though more than a thousand strong, would not oppose him, and were ready to yield it to him personally. He had only to ride on, and take possession.

Browne, without more ado, started off at once towards the fort with only his personal escort of



CANDAHAR IN THE FAR DISTANCE.

From a drawing by Mr. R. Caton Woodville, reproduced by permission of the Artist and the Proprietors of "The Illustrated London News."

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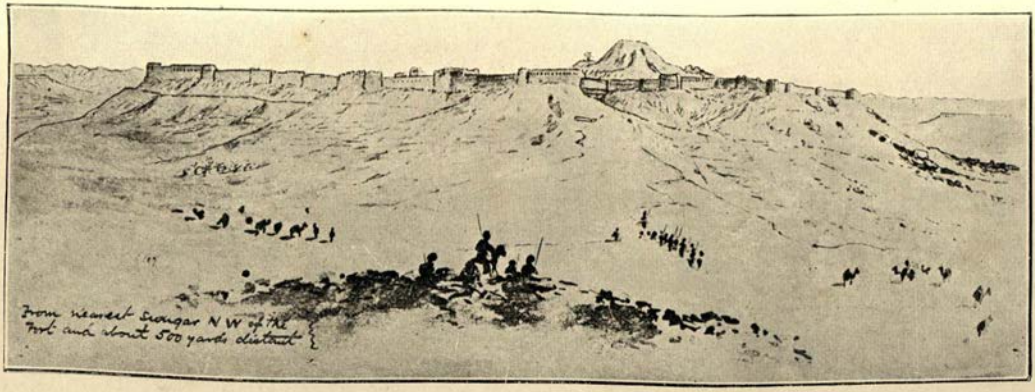
eighteen Sowars, and as he approached it he saw to his delight that a part of the garrison was already in full retreat, whilst others were lining the ramparts and gates in an undecided manner. So, within a short distance of it, he sent forward one of his party with orders to the commandant to surrender himself and the fort at once under the alternative of being blown to pieces by the army which was coming on behind. The commandant seemed to hesitate for a few moments, but at last came out, on which Browne placed two of his men with lances behind him, giving orders to run him through on the first sign of treachery; and then, going straight into the fort with the rest of his men, he turned out all the remainder of the garrison, and placing sentries on the gate and elsewhere, took formal possession of the fortress. After which, leaving the bulk of his party there, on guard over the guns and the locked gates, he returned without further delay to the camp and reported his proceedings to the general, who, he added, had only to march on at once and take possession forthwith. A cavalry reconnaissance he heard had been ordered; but none, he said, was really needed.

The audacity of this act was splendid, for he had not yet dreamt of its connection with his singular relations to the Ghilzyes. Its importance was obvious, but beyond holding the place for a month, no further forward movement or other step was taken; and all Browne's hopes of its leading at once to a further advance towards Cabul came to nothing.

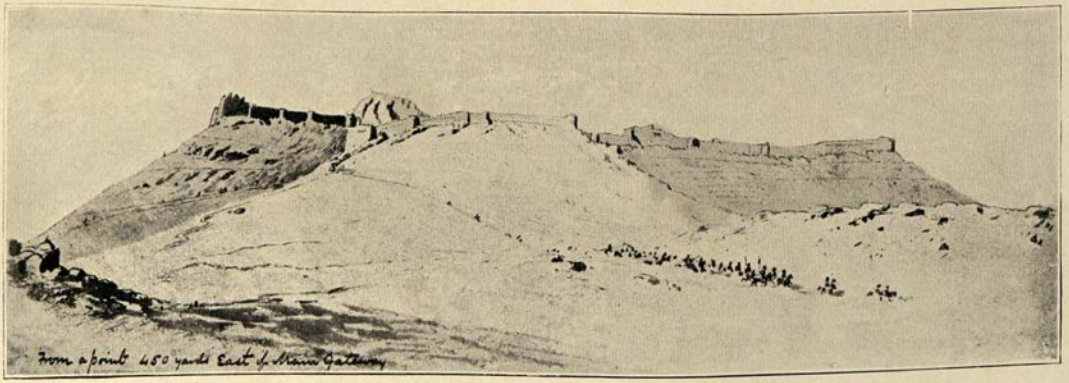
It need hardly be said that Browne, though perfectly ready and glad to seize the opportunity thus offered, had remained silent on the popular illusions about himself, feeling perfectly certain that they

would soon be exploded and cleared up, and that the General, if he knew of them at all, would laugh at them. At any rate, Stewart took no other view of Browne's influence than that he was another John Nicholson, with a special power over these wild clansmen, of which power it was expedient to take all possible advantage. It will be seen that in later days he continued to recognise this influence of Browne's, and was instrumental in helping him to positions, as in the Hurnai work, where he could give it full scope and play. Eventually, by the end of February, Browne was on his way back to Candahar, where the whole force again concentrated. His peculiar influence meanwhile continued, and during all the time the force remained at Khelat it was never molested nor were there ever any attempts at murders or fanatical attacks, while, when they got back to Candahar, they found that the troops there, though reinforced from Bombay, were in a constant state of fidget and under fire all night.

There is no doubt that the facts and incidents of the operations of Stewart's force, as there had been so little fighting, were not so striking and interesting to the public as those of the Peshawur and Kurum columns; and Browne's disappointment at not advancing farther was great. But Candahar itself was the key of Stewart's position, and its distance, and even that of Quetta, from British India was incomparably greater than that of the positions reached by the other two forces. So that, while the operations of the latter, including those in the Kurum country and the Peiwar Kotul fight, and the seizure of the Shuturgurdun Pass, had practically *ended* by the first week of December 1878, it was only then that Stewart had been able to *begin* work at all, and arrange to



PANORAMA OF KHELAT-I-GHILZIE. NORTH-WEST ASPECT.



PANORAMA OF KHELAT-I-GHILZIE. EASTERN ASPECT.

[*To face p.* 192.

cross the border from Quetta towards the Khojak Pass and Candahar. When he began that advance, Shere Ali had already fled into Turkestan with the avowed intention of suing for the intervention and support of Russia; and Sir Donald's retirement from Khelat-i-Ghilzie was simultaneous with the news of the death of Shere Ali and of Yakoob Khan's formal succession and immediate efforts to arrange for terms of peace.

But this withdrawal from Khelat-i-Ghilzie, whatever its cause, being in time of war, although no actual fighting occurred, suffered from the usual unpleasant concomitants of all withdrawals or retreats, and greatly harassed the work of the staff, especially of the supply officers; and Browne suffered much from its inconvenience. An imaginary incident in the negotiations during this withdrawal may be described as between S., a supply officer, and N., a native merchant, who had hitherto during the *advance* helped him freely about supplies, etc.

1. S. now, from a camp on the return march, sends to N. as before for supplies.

2. N. reports himself sick, and unable to help him.

3. S. sends peremptory and threatening orders, backed by a few troopers.

4. N. accompanies the party back, with streams of pack animals, etc.

5. S. reproves him severely for his reply.

6. N. deprecates his wrath, and asserts the impossibility of his supplying him except on receiving very stern orders as in No. 3.

7. S. repudiates the excuse, as such orders had never been needed before.

8. N. admits this, but says that now he, N., would,

alas! have to satisfy the Ameer's agents, and he really needed something more imperative and savage than such threats as in item 3.

9. S. "Then write out such a letter from me to you as you want me to sign."

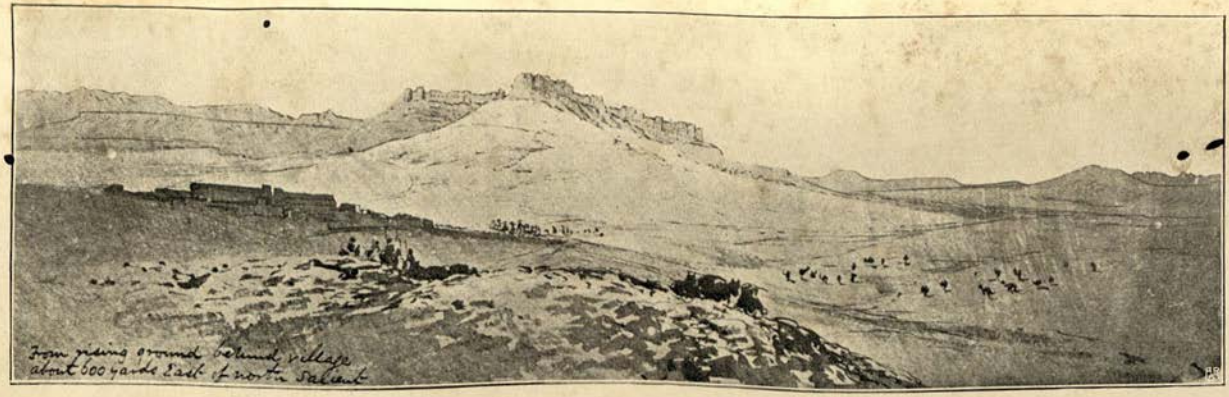
10. N. drafts a gem, teeming with abuse and blood-curdling horrors—threatening the entire male population with impalement and other punishments.

11. S. signs it, and comments thus: "I wonder whether in years to come this precious document will ever come to light and I be handed down to posterity as a second Nero? It is, I fear, quite likely. We are certain to re-enter Afghanistan some day. As sure as we do, N.'s descendants will produce my 'Indent for supplies' as a testimonial to the good services performed by their ancestor in former years. The budding political to whom it will be shown will be horrified at its ingenious brutality, and, at the dinner-table, will be outspoken in his righteous indignation against the political methods of former days. The story will spread, and some war correspondent with a thirst for horrors will pounce on the precious morsel, wire an embellished version to his paper—yes, and no doubt in the end I shall be held up to opprobrium on the platform of Exeter Hall, and pilloried as a monster in human shape and a true type of the Indian official."

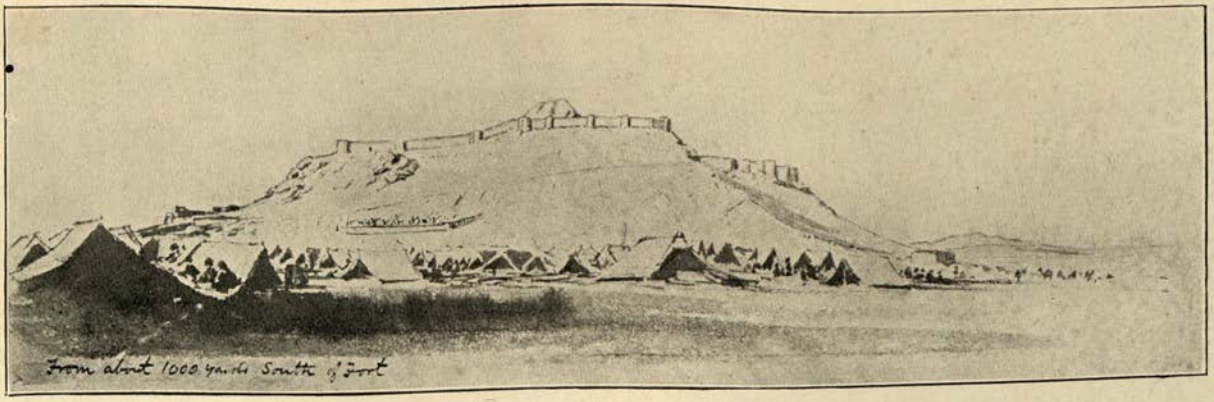
Such were Browne's experiences of the Afghan campaign.

Meanwhile, during Stewart's and Browne's absence at Khelat-i-Ghilzie, Biddulph's columns on the Helmund, towards Herat, had been having an interesting experience.

On January 16th, the day after General Stewart had begun the movement towards Khelat-i-Ghilzie,



PANORAMA OF KHELAT-I-GHILZIE. NORTHERN ASPECT.



PANORAMA OF KHELAT-I-GHILZIE. SOUTH ASPECT.

[*To face p.* 194.

Biddulph's force started from Candahar to Girishk, on the Helmund, and arrived there at the end of the month. The party remained there exploring and surveying and gathering information till February 23rd, when it began to return. On the 26th the rear guard was attacked by a party of Alizyes, whom it defeated and punished severely, but with the loss of one officer. The whole country affecting the route from Candahar to Girishk was thoroughly surveyed, and General Biddulph sent a very full and able report on its strategical features and considerations.[1]

General Biddulph was now free for the exploring expedition, of which he had received notice, and in which he was to be aided by Browne and Nicholson, through the hitherto unseen and unknown Thul Chotiali district between Quetta and the Derajat. But before proceeding to the narrative of these operations, we may close the present portion of the subject by citing the memorandum on the Candahar question drawn up by General Stewart.

"Covering as it does the roads from Eastern Persia and Herat, as well as that from Cabul and Ghuznee, Candahar is, no doubt, a position of much importance. The features of the country in the immediate vicinity of the city are favourable for defence, but its occupation by us would entail the establishment of strong posts on the Helmund and at Khelat-i-Ghilzie at least, bringing the intervening districts under our control.

"Assuming, however, the retention of the countr embraced within the limits here indicated, we do no thereby obtain a satisfactory frontier, because it woul be impossible to guard such a long and exposed lin without a series of military or police posts as connect ing links.

"While recognising the strategical importance o

[1] This report and a full account of General Biddulph's march wi be found in Vol. XXIV. No. CVII of the Journal for 1880 of th R.U.S. Institution.

Candahar, its occupation now would, in my opinion, be a mistake, even from a military point of view, seeing we could at any moment lay hands on it from our base in Pesheen.

"I am aware that military critics of high authority consider the retention of Candahar to be essential to the security of our frontier, on the ground, apparently, that the Afghans might some day construct works at that place which would neutralise the advantages which our proximity to it would give us.

"This is, no doubt, a possible contingency, but it does not counterbalance the immediate and very patent disadvantage of a premature occupation; and our engagements with the Afghan state will be on a very unsatisfactory footing if they do not make due provision to meet contingencies of this character. As a purely military question, therefore, the possession of Candahar would in my judgment place us in a false position, and in point of fact be a source of great disadvantage to us.

"The political objections to the retention of Candahar in opposition to the wishes of the Afghans seem to me to be very strong.

"For many years our policy in India has ceased to be an aggressive one, and this policy has been avowed in the utterances of the Government during the present war. It follows, therefore, that on principle we ought not to annex a rood of land that is not really essential to the security of our frontiers; to do otherwise would be to discredit us in the estimation of the world.

"It has been suggested that we might hold Candahar by an amicable agreement with the Afghan Government, and if this could be arranged, it would be unobjectionable, but I am inclined to think this is the last thing the Afghans would be disposed to accede to.

"Though the people of this province profess to be tired of the Barakzye rule, it must not be assumed that they are prepared to receive us with favour. So far as I am in a position to judge, they detest us cordially; and I am under the impression that our immunity from anything like organised opposition is largely due to the fact that our dealings with the people are taken as an indication that our occupation is a temporary one only.

"As regards the unpopularity of the Barakzye *régime*, it should be recollected that the military force employed in the province for many years has been of insignificant strength; a fact that discredits the idea of an oppressive or very obnoxious system of government.

"It has been further alleged, by high authority, that the occupation of Candahar would be a *final* settlement of the frontier question; but if there is one point more than another on which it would be safe to utter a prophecy, it is that circumstances would necessitate further movements at no distant date, until some natural boundary had been reached—indeed, the most fatal of the objections to Candahar as a frontier is its want of defined and defensible boundaries.

"By restricting our advance to Pesheen we have a strong and, in most respects, a satisfactory frontier, and from that position we can lay our hands on Candahar at any moment; and this being so, I fail to see why we should anticipate events by undertaking a costly, onerous, and exceedingly troublesome charge, involving, as it must do, the government of a large province, inhabited by a warlike, fanatical, and turbulent population, whose independence it is our interest to foster, and whose friendship we should do our utmost to secure. . . . What I say is, that every advantage expected from the occupation of Candahar can be secured at a far less cost by the occupation of Pesheen, which gives us in addition a very strong defensible frontier. A great number of people think Candahar essential and a barrier against Russia. But they forget that our keeping the province would reduce the Afghan kingdom to a position of dependence which would always be a danger to us and utterly prevent the Afghans themselves from ever becoming our hearty friends."

CANDAHAR, *April 18th*, 1879.

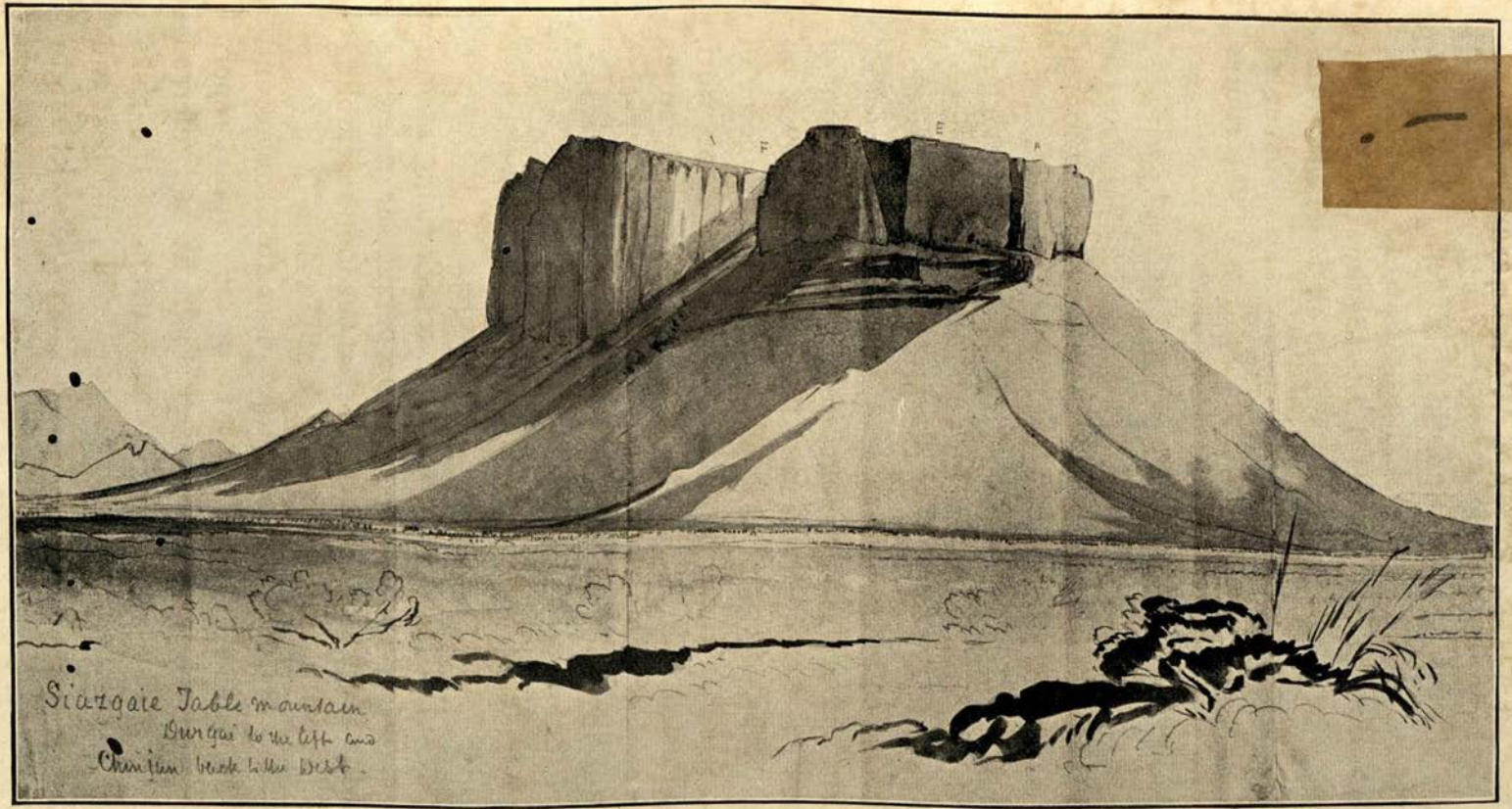
To proceed: General Biddulph was now directed, in February, 1879, to return to the Punjab through the Thul Chotiali country to the Derajat frontier. He was to command a division in three separate columns, and to explore and report fully on the district; and was accompanied by Nicholson on his military staff

and Browne as his political officer. They left Candahar on March 7th and proceeded to Baloza, the point whence the passes lead to the district that was to be examined and which they reached on the 22nd. Biddulph was to make a general survey of the country with special consideration of the routes suitable for roads and railways and the movements of troops, and of the sites for military positions. Major Sandeman accompanied the force. The march ended at the Chenab on April 27th. Between March 22nd and April 27th the exploration was ceaseless, and Browne was constantly in charge of detached parties. At first the march lay in the Kakur country, afterwards in the land of the Murrees and Bhoogtees and other Belooch clans.

The camps were sometimes at an elevation of 7,000 to 8,000 feet, and sometimes low down on the banks of the rivers and streams. From some of these points the explorers could see into Zhob, Bori, and Pesheen, and noticed that the lie of the hill ranges was such that from nearly one apparent centre streams would flow to four such different points as the Derajat, the Cutchee, Seistan, and Pesheen.

Some very singular mountain formations were met with on the Suliman ranges. One of them, the Siazgaie Hill, may be mentioned; a rock rising almost sheer out of the plain, with perpendicular sides for half the height, and slopes of 45° at the foot, resembling in a measure the Fortress Rock of Gwalior.

This march was a great enjoyment to Browne, and of special interest in his case, as in his original report to Lord Lytton on the Cutchee Plain he had referred to the possibility that, in consequence of the risks as to the lie of the beds of the Indus, the best and safest permanent route to the Quetta district might



SIAZGAIE TABLE MOUNTAIN.

[*To face p.* 198.

be found to lie through this very tract, Thul Chotiali, which he was now helping to survey.

The task occupied almost a month; the hot weather was coming on, and so Browne had to part from Biddulph, which he did with great regret. He received much kindly recognition both from him and from General Stewart, and later on very honourable mention in dispatches.

Some of the phrases they used may be quoted:

"His special knowledge contributing materially towards the completion of the Government desire to effect a conciliatory passage."

"Your services were invaluable."

"Facilitated these explorations in a most marked degree."

"I do not think it has ever been clearly pointed out that you were the mainspring of all the discoveries in these parts on the famous march from Pesheen to the Derajat."

Such were the remarks of the generals.

This march closed Browne's connection with the Afghan war; and on finding that no satisfactory employment was likely to be available, he applied for leave and proceeded to England on a holiday of which the incidents will be described in the next chapter.

At first there had been a chance, which however came to nothing, of his accompanying Cavagnari to Cabul—and afterwards while in England, hearing of the outbreak of the second war consequent on Cavagnari's murder, he asked for employment in it; but his application was not acceded to, and he remained on leave for the full time.

Meanwhile he had not yet realised *correctly* what was the nature of the exceptional influence he exercised over the Ghilzyes, or what its real origin was, or what the position they insisted on assigning to him.

One of the incidents may be recorded. When about to accompany Biddulph, one of his friends, a *Ghilzye* chief—Sado Khan—warned him against going into *Kakur* country, and prayed him to pay proper heed to the customary ceremonials of Mullahs, such as the recital of the orthodox creed, the saintly blessings, and the like. But this only amused him.

It may be observed that General Biddulph (not knowing of this episode) was specially surprised by some of the instances of his influence and success and escapes, and was unable, for instance, to understand how it was that Browne and his party were not, on a certain occasion, murdered by the Achukzye clan, about Candahar. As the result of his work during and after this campaign, he was mentioned four times in dispatches, and was made a C.S.I.

As to general matters during this warfare, though a watch was being kept up on the Herat direction, Russian action had ceased in Afghanistan itself and to its north-west, and the Berlin Conference had been held; but Colley had left India for the supreme post in South Africa, where the first troubles were beginning that soon increased steadily and caused such prolonged anxiety. Gordon had left Central Africa after five years of efforts to deal with the slave trade, only to find that the fanatic element there was beginning to assume a threatening aspect, while very soon the Mahdi was to come into notice more to the north. The Soudan and the Zulus also were threatening in the south—a gloomy prospect indeed.

CHAPTER XIII

TWO YEARS ON FURLOUGH: 1879-81

ON FURLOUGH—RUSSIAN STUDIES—PARIS—A FORTRESS EPISODE—CANDAHAR QUESTION—DEATH OF COLONEL PIERSON—END OF LORD LYTTON'S RULE.

WHEN Browne now proceeded on furlough, towards the end of 1879, the prospects of peace with Afghanistan seemed assured, and Lord Lytton was not only pressing forward his coercion of Afghanistan, but was proceeding on the lines of a new policy respecting it—viz. its partition into two provinces: the northern to continue the country of Afghanistan with its own ruler, but with a British representative as Resident at its capital, Cabul; the southern, Candahar, to be placed under a separate ruler, as an outlying province of British India, stretching up to Herat, and so cutting off the communications of Cabul by the old round-about route to Persia and Turkestan. Negotiations were conducted with Yakoob Khan as the new Ameer, and ended in the treaty of Gundamuck on May 26th, followed by Sir Louis Cavagnari's assumption of the post of Resident at Cabul. Sir Donald Stewart, however, with his own force and the new Bombay division, remained in the neighbourhood of Candahar, with the ultimate object of placing it under the rule not of the Ameer, but of Wali Sheré Ali Khan, whom

he had already appointed as the proposed temporary governor.

Meanwhile Browne's plans for his furlough involved that he should at first reside in France for about a year, and after that in England. His first object was the study of Russian, and it was to this task that he devoted his year of residence in France. The efficacy of the knowledge he in the end acquired may be gathered from the practical use he made of it on one occasion. There had been resident in India for some years past a Russian lady who had been in the habit of posing as a spiritualist or mystic; and her name and with it the stories that were current about her now cropped up at a gathering in Paris where Browne was present. "But," says one Russian officer to another, in their own language, "who and what is she really?" "Oh, don't you know—she is one of the X department," mentioning the bureau to which, as was well known to Indian officials, appertained the task of political watch and agitation and the spread of sedition against the British Government! Such strong confirmation of the current rumours was not long, it soon appeared, in reaching the proper quarters.

It might have been thought that Browne would be glad to have some rest after the anxious and arduous work at which he had been engaged during the last few years, but he was so much on the strain, mentally, that a touch of really idle rest was impossible, and change of work sufficed. And, after all, so exceptional was his linguistic aptitude that even such a study as that of Russian—carried out too in his own jocund and exceptional fashion—was no strain to him whatever. As yet few other people had gone in for the study of that language, but with

the example he now set many officers began soon to follow suit. Browne himself felt assured that new and wider channels of employment and advancement would soon be opening out, and that Russia was looming clearly in the near distance. So he went in briskly and energetically for the task.

His mode of studying Russian may be described, and the rollicking mode of life he led in Paris, so thoroughly conversant as he was from his earliest days with the language and ways of his French neighbours. He set out by securing the services of *two* teachers of the Russian language—one, I believe, specially scholastic, and the other specially linguistic. With these two he studied on alternate days—and then, during his leisure hours after the lessons, he used to take long walks into the country, book in hand, learning the language by heart, and declaiming aloud what he was thus learning.

He was much amused by the suspicion with which the police watched him; ending as it did in his being arrested, and, when soon recognised as an English officer, favoured with a hearty apology for the blunder from the famous old soldier before whom he had been summoned, followed by his friendship. The police view was that, after all, and whatever else he might be, he was nothing more than a harmless English lunatic.

While he was engaged in this study, he lightened it by occasional excursions into the country and to places of interest. In one of these tours he arrived at one of those numerous towns where there was some affectation of mystery or secrecy, some spot which it was *défendu* to visit, and so forth—precisely the case to excite his desire for some fun. So he donned what he could manage approximating

best to the comic stage equipment of the stereotyped English countryman on his travels—uncouth hat on the back of his head, huge umbrella under his arm, and the rest—and proceeded to stroll about, gazing open-mouthed as if stupid and bored at everything. At length he reached the forbidden ground, and with barefaced impudence, and an air of stolid ignorance, invaded it, sauntering about as if to kill time.

Presently up comes a gendarme and informs him, with much gesticulation, that it was forbidden for any one to walk there. It is hardly necessary to say, remembering Browne's turn for language and his early years in France, that he not only spoke and understood ordinary French well, but was also an adept at its slang and *argot*. But instead of replying or arguing, he just looked at the gendarme dully, and said, with an atrocious English accent, "Anglais," and walked on. After trying all he could, short of force, and getting nothing but "Anglais" out of Browne, he called another gendarme who also got nothing out of Browne but "Anglais," and failed to stop him. The men then summoned their sergeant, who succeeded no better—and Browne still walked quietly on. The men then walked behind him and talked him over. One man said, "He calls himself English, but he looks more like a German or Italian. I don't like his look—it is not English." The other answered, "Oh, but see what a stupid fool he looks! That shows he is English. All English are stupid pigs." Then they asked the sergeant what he thought of him.

The sergeant, in a voice of conviction that quite settled the question, replied, "He is English; I know he is English; I can prove he is English. You think he is English because he looks stupid. That is true—

all English are stupid fools—but there is a stronger mark of the Englishman. Look at his umbrella—see how tight he holds it under his arm. Now an Englishman will leave his country, he will leave his home, he will leave his children, he will leave his wife, but he will never leave his umbrella. I know he is English!"

Browne of course understood perfectly all the flattering things they said about English people in general and himself in particular; but, he said, when it came to the climax of the umbrella, he nearly gave himself away by the inclination to burst out laughing. He controlled himself, however, and with the three men behind him, cutting jokes at his expense, he walked on till he was clear of the forbidden ground.

It was while he was still in Paris and partly during his residence in England that the further events and episodes of the Afghan war occurred. First Cavagnari and his party were attacked and killed; then Roberts's column, being the nearest to Cabul, advanced against it and took it after some sharp actions on the way; and trials and retributions for the murders followed. After this the country was for a few months nominally settled and quiescent. Then, as in the older Afghan war, came the inevitable risings; and Roberts's forces, which were dispersed, were in the first instance defeated, and had to concentrate in the Sherpore entrenchment; but after a few days they attacked and dispersed the Afghan army.

Meanwhile Stewart's position at Candahar had been greatly strengthened by the arrival of the Bombay troops. But now he heard of Roberts's difficulties, and was ordered to leave the Bombay force to hold Candahar, and to march with his own division to

Ghuznee and Cabul. On the way he had a sharp fight and won a decisive victory.

But, with the several movements that have been mentioned, serious changes in the strength of the military positions had been occurring. When Stewart had first come to Candahar, he had two divisions there—and these were being reinforced by troops from Bombay; then he sent off Biddulph to India by the Thul Chotiali route, and with him one of his two divisions, which left at Candahar Stewart's one division and the Bombay force. And during all this time Ayub Khan had been holding Herat, and had not been meddled with, nor had he attempted any forward movement while there were two British divisions present at Candahar. But when Stewart departed from Candahar with his own division for Cabul, as above described, Ayub Khan took advantage of the consequent weakening of the force at Candahar to march on it from Herat by Girishk, the site of Biddulph's operations. The result of this bold advance of Ayub Khan was that, in consequence of the mismanagement of the British commanders left in charge, their force was defeated at Maiwand and fled ignominiously into Candahar, which then came under a state of siege.

These were the events that had been occurring in India in 1881 during Browne's stay in Paris and later on in London, whence he had again tried to be allowed to join the army in India, but again without success, and where therefore he busied himself still more strenuously in all that was being done in connection with the operations in India.

The second year of Browne's furlough now saw him established in London, and chiefly occupied in the study of the political situation and the aspect of

coming events—both of them very serious—so serious as to demand some description, in two directions at least, India and Africa. To take the latter first: Colley, who was now the British representative, had come to loggerheads with the Boer fraternity, and began operations against them by seizing and occupying the Majuba Hill, which overlooked and commanded the Boer camp. The results are but too well known—his defeat and death, and the prolonged strife ending in the South African war.

In India, Ayub Khan had advanced from Herat and invaded the Candahar territory, thus giving Sir Frederick Roberts the much desired opportunity of recovering, in the eyes of the public, his recent signal repute, which had, without doubt, been shaken by the Sherpore business, however skilfully and quickly he had turned the tables on the enemy. He had a true and more than loyal friend in Sir Donald Stewart, with whose support he led southwards a picked force of 10,000 men to the recovery of the position at Candahar. His march and battle are too well known to need description. The result was, of course, a certainty; but the conduct of the march—a model feat—the thoroughness of Ayub Khan's defeat, and the promptitude of the recovery of the frontier at Candahar, with the clearance of the gloom which had been caused by previous occurrences, led to an exuberance of satisfaction and rejoicing with the British public, and to Roberts's advancement to the peerage.

Meanwhile Sir Donald Stewart had arranged with Abdurrahman that he should become the new Ameer, and had withdrawn the British force from Cabul into British territory. But, as if political and military troubles were not sufficient subjects for worry,

poor Lord Lytton was now, before the end came, to become the victim of a financial blundering—blundering so great, so obvious, and so grotesque that it seems inconceivable that it should have passed undetected by the able body of councillors by whom he was surrounded. Being called on to state the cost of the war, they had deliberately answered *five* millions, whereas it had really amounted to some *eighteen* millions. The fault was thought to lie with the financial officers in their quoting the amount of the *booked* outlay instead of the *whole* outlay, with explanations of any recoveries or drawbacks that might be counted on. But the palpable blunder roused widespread ridicule and irritation.

An early change of the ministry in England followed promptly, with the recall of Lord Lytton and the appointment of Lord Ripon as his successor.

One immediate result of the termination of the war and the change of ministry was a great discussion and dispute regarding the disposal of Candahar. Apparently all the fine points of Lord Lytton's policy were set aside, and, quite irrespective of the new Ameer's position and voice in the matter, the question that arose was whether or not we should retain Candahar. The grounds that were raised, pro and con, covered a very wide range; but Browne, as he had been there or thereabouts for so long a period, eventually had a public meeting called by his friends, and gave a lecture in London on the subject.

He had, first of all, been in direct communication with Lord Lytton on the subject, and had addressed to him a memorandum advocating withdrawal; and this paper Lord Lytton had sent to *The Times* with a memorandum of his own views dissenting from

Browne. Correspondence and interviews with leading statesmen had then followed—resulting, in England, in controversies in which the several divergent views generally followed English party politics, while Browne's were based on the military and frontier aspects of the case.

At length, at the end of the year, he gave the lecture referred to on the subject, at the East India Association,[1] when his former chief, Sir Alexander Taylor, presided, and nearly every gentleman of repute in Indian affairs was present. He there strongly, clearly, and with obvious success advocated on the one hand the restoration of Candahar to Afghanistan, and on the other the occupation and the formation of a strong position on the Khwaja Amran range (by which Stewart's force had marched to Candahar) and at Pesheen itself. He further urged strongly the necessity for rail and road communication by Biddulph's route from the Derajat into the Thul Chotiali districts, and reiterated the objections he had laid before Lord Lytton to the arrangements, as a permanency, of the suggested communications between Sukkur and the passes about Quetta. The discussions that ensued covered all the points of interest that were involved, and were very valuable from the interest they evoked.

During this stay in London Browne was, in fact, making most admirable use of his time in acquiring information and coming in touch with the leading men of the country. Not only was he thus making valuable use of his holiday, but he had plunged into authorship, and in quite a different line of thought. His strong religious feeling and his deep convictions have been referred to in previous chapters; and now, in consequence of much controversy that was going

[1] This lecture is published in full in the Journal of the E.I.A., 1881.

on in England, he took up the cudgels against the scepticism that was more or less rampant, by writing and publishing a small brochure on the subject, on a purely mathematical basis. Its technicality and extremely condensed or compressed style entirely prevented its reaching the public or attracting attention, but it found its way to America, where it excited interest and was well noticed. A professional lecturer there used to quote largely from it, and spoke of it as "the most crushing reply he had ever come across to would-be scientists and materialists, and the subtlest attack on scepticism he had ever had experience of." It later on received attention and approval from Sir George Stokes, of Cambridge, one of the most eminent mathematicians of the day.

It was while Browne had not yet returned to India that he heard of the death of his brother-in-law and brother officer—his school friend, and lifelong comrade, W. H. Pierson. Though the Afghan war had come to an end, the frontier troubles had continued, and Browne's old foes of 1860, the Mahsood Wuzeerees, had to be coerced. Pierson had been ordered there in March, 1881; but the very trying climate and exposure had led to an attack of dysentery which ended fatally in the following September. He had won the gold medal of the British Association at the age of seventeen and came out in the Bengal Engineers, head of Addiscombe, in three instead of the customary four terms, winning the Pollock Medal. He was a superb musician, a high-class chess player, and an enthusiastic boating man, pulling bow in many a winning race. He used to take first spears in hog-hunting, had seen much military service, and had been three times mentioned in dispatches. Till ordered on the Wuzeeree expedition, he had been for some time the

Secretary of the Defence Committe of India, which had been hard at work during all Lord Lytton's *régime*. But before that he had been mainly employed on the telegraph line through Persia, and passed through many interesting episodes in contests with the predatory bands by which the survey parties used to be attacked. His death was felt to be a great loss to his corps and to the state.

But, before quitting the subject of Lord Lytton's rule, a few words may be said of the impressions left upon such a man as Browne by the methods and results of brilliant genius when regardless and, it may be said, contemptuous of matured practical experience. Lord Lytton set aside all men of note and leant on newly discovered geniuses—Colley, Cavagnari, Roberts, Pelly, Griffin, and the like; but it came in the end to Sir Donald Stewart being seen to be the mainstay of the empire, shrewd and wise, a man who would not put out his arm too far and was ever careful to feel his way. Lytton would not believe the Ameer, while the Ameer, like Dost Mahomed, was correct and sound in his knowledge of the people, and of the proper policy, which has held good ever since to the present day. He *would* force his embassy on the Ameer, and had to face the ignominy of its rejection. He *would* send Cavagnari to Cabul, and was stultified and punished by his murder. He *would* send the youngest of his generals to the chief post at Cabul, with the result of Sherpore. He *would* weaken the strategical position of Candahar, with the result of Maiwand and the necessity for the return march from Cabul to Candahar. He wished further to plant our own representatives at Cabul and Candahar, though at neither capital was one eventually established.

But Lord Lytton did, on the other hand, carry out many very valuable measures. He may be fairly credited with a vigorous advance towards the present efficiency in dealing with famines, though his predecessor, Lord Northbrook, was the first to organise any thorough treatment of such visitations; and he started the system of coast, frontier, and internal defences which have now been carried out, or are still being constructed. These are two measures of primary or imperial importance with which his name will ever be associated, though, as felt by Browne and contemporaries, he was inclined to rely on a few selected men of his own choice, and to ignore the vast field of able, zealous, and effective officers, of matured experience, whom he had at his disposal. To use one of Browne's phrases, the methods and measures were all "jumpy."

The result naturally was that, after his rule was at an end, the "jumpiness" was continued by the almost wanton destruction of the road and railway system which he had inaugurated in the Cutchee, in aid of the Quetta and Candahar operations; which could with ease have been utilised for the arrangements and measures eventually adopted.

One of Lord Lytton's views, for which it is but just to give him the fullest credit, was the necessity for adopting for the wilder frontier districts, as had been done in the older days of the annexation of the Punjab, a perfectly different system of rule and administration from that in force in the more civilised territories. The old names for the contrasted systems were the "regulation" and the "non-regulation," and it had been Lord Lytton's original intention, delayed from stress of other work, to constitute the whole of the tracts lying on the right of the Indus as one

or more non-regulation provinces. This change has been fully carried out since, and it was, in fact, partly put in force by Lord Lytton himself when he constituted Sandeman his agent for the rule of Beloochistan. The necessity and merits of the change are dealt with in a later chapter, and to no one was it more a matter of thought and of interest than to Browne, who succeeded Sandeman in those duties, but whose rule was, as will be seen, much affected and hampered by the tendency of Government to modify the methods into more "regulation" channels.

It may be observed here that the Afghan war was the practical outcome of the Russo-Turkish war, and that there would have been the further outcome of England and Russia joining in the strife but for the Berlin treaties. And, further, though England and Russia had made a treaty which put a stop to the idea of a war between them, still it cannot but strike one as unsatisfactory that the methods described so clearly by Lord Palmerston should be allowed to continue in force. No steps seemed ever to be taken to exclude from the customary treatment and rights of the agents of civilised countries those who violate the procedure and amenities due to other states. The Russian agents who remained at Cabul to stir up strife long after England and Russia had formed their treaty might, one would suppose, be held liable to treatment as outside the pale of civilised law. The same remark applies to those who were the aggressors in later days in what is known as the Penjdeh incident.

During the latter part of Browne's furlough, though the Afghan war had come to an end, public matters remained everywhere unsettled, and there was much turmoil in three several continents, all affecting

England, engaging Browne's attention, and influencing his career. And this heat in the political atmosphere continued to increase rapidly, till it developed into the rebellion of Arabi and the consequent war in Egypt.

In Europe the excitement lay between England on the one hand and Russia and France on the other. Russia was, as ever, intriguing keenly in connection with the Turkish question, and the French were more or less at issue regarding Egypt, while the English had acquired Cyprus as a valuable basis for watch and operation.

In Asia the Russians, after conquering Geok Tepe and settling boundary arrangements with Persia, were stirring in Turkestan and advancing towards Merv, under the guidance of the famed Lessar as their surveyor. The utmost confusion and turmoil still prevailed in our districts about Quetta and the Cutchee, and generally over India, owing to the change in the viceroyalty from Lytton to Ripon, and the cessation of the Forward Policy.

Towards the end of 1881, when his furlough had come to an end, Browne returned to India, and on reaching Bombay found himself appointed to the special task of surveying, examining, and reporting on the extension of railway systems in the Central Provinces of India—*i.e.* Nagpore and the adjacent districts. This involved exploration on elephant-back of districts covered with dense jungle, and the use of the same class of instruments as when he had examined the Cutchee. The work suited him thoroughly, and he finished the job in a few weeks, making his report long before the Government had expected it. He received their warm acknowledgments, and was forthwith posted to Simla to the office of the

military department in which he was appointed to the preparation of the designs suggested by the Defence Committee, to which reference has been already made. This was for him an entirely new line of work, and a novel experience; but he turned to it with zest and soon took a keen interest in it, being brought into fresh association with Nicholson, his brother officer and comrade of Thul Chotiali days.

The Defence Committee, it may be observed, had been now at work for some time, and the working up of these conclusions and the preparation of the designs for the schemes they had advocated proved to be the particular duty on which Browne was now engaged. Owing to his independent habits of thought and very varied experience, he was of special use in this new post, in which he had to deal with the defences of India internal as well as external; and to himself the work was of much advantage, as, while utilising his old experiences at Attock and Peshawur and the frontier, he was led to broader views and grave practical questions of higher military and strategical consideration.

But, after only a few months of this occupation, a fresh change was to take place in his career. Such stir as there was on the Afghan frontier or in the direction of Russia will be presently described; but the fanatical feeling in Egypt, which had come to a crisis, must be now dealt with, and the war which consequently ensued. Arabi Pasha was for a while master of the situation. The British fleet had bombarded the defences of Alexandria, and war had been declared. At first it was uncertain what steps would be taken in which India should bear a part; but at length it was decided that General Herbert

Macpherson should lead a contingent to Egypt. And to that contingent Browne was appointed Commanding Royal Engineer, with Nicholson as one of his officers.

Of course, some short time elapsed before this decision was arrived at, and in that interval Browne's special attention was more directly turned to sea-coast defences, not only for the ports of India, but those that he might have to deal with in the coming campaign. Till the definite decisions were arrived at and the orders received, Browne increased his knowledge and laboured as strenuously as ever at these harbour defences, and also at railway designs and arrangements in connection with the defences and for strategical purposes generally; but when once the orders were received, he was indefatigable in his preparations and inquiries. In these matters he was much helped by his friend Mr. (afterwards Sir) Guilford Molesworth, with suggestions for the work that probably lay before him, and with practical assistance in getting the engineer and railway equipment he would certainly need. It will be seen later on how valuable was this practical help, not only to Browne himself, but to the whole ensuing war, as his very complete equipment led to his railway branch being employed to an exceptional degree.

While Browne is preparing for the Egyptian campaign, we must turn to other complications that he had been watching. The Russians had conquered Geok Tepe, and were now stirring in Turkestan and advancing on Merv, giving rise to much anxiety, the *Mervousness* sneered at by His Grace of Argyll They had settled their boundary arrangements with Persia, and Lessar was in charge of the Merv surveys and explorations. Needless to say, the keenest watch

was felt to be necessary and was being kept up in that direction. At the same time, the settlement of our own measures in regard to Afghanistan had advanced so far that it had been decided that Candahar was to be given up, while Quetta had been already formally acquired and incorporated into British Indian territory, and Abdur Rahman was busy in organising his new rule of Afghanistan.

CHAPTER XIV

THE EGYPTIAN WAR: 1882

THE EGYPTIAN WAR—GENERAL SKETCH—PALMER'S EXPEDITION AND DEATH—DETAILS OF THE CAMPAIGN AS REGARDS THE INDIAN CONTINGENT—DEDUCTIONS FROM THE CAMPAIGN.

THIS Egyptian war in which Browne was now to take a part was practically the beginning of the long-continued conflict of Britain in North-east Africa against Mahomedan misrule and fanaticism; though it had not yet taken the later form of Mahdi-ism. The Mahdi and his followers had not yet appeared at, much less north of, Khartoum, though their territory covered ten degrees of longitude and ten of latitude immediately to its south. Their attitude was very threatening. They were known to be advancing, and in the very next year they were giving trouble about Suakim. It was under the heated atmosphere which they were creating that Arabi had been playing his quasi-patriotic, but really self-seeking part and stirring up Alexandria into fanatical revolt. There its Egyptian population in accord with him were showing their hostility to the British and Europeans generally. It was essential that this spirit should be met and crushed, and, as France had declined to co-operate with her, England was now undertaking the task single-handed, and had begun by the bombardment of Alexandria.

The general features of the subsequent campaign may be at once sketched briefly, without dealing further with the original outbreak.

The British force (from England) first showed itself at Alexandria and hovered about in that neighbourhood. Then British ships-of-war blocked the two ends of the Suez Canal, Port Said and Suez, and dominated the whole sea-coast of Egypt. On this, but while the Indian contingent was still *en route* from Bombay to Suez, Arabi Pasha concentrated the Egyptian army at Benha, south-east of Alexandria, a railway junction for the lines from Alexandria, from Cairo, from Damietta, and from Suez; after which he threw out detachments from Benha eastwards to Zagazig and Tel-el-Kebir, and then awaited further developments.

On the other hand, about the middle of August, when the Indian contingent might be soon expected to appear near Suez, Wolseley, who commanded the whole expedition, disappeared with his fleet, and the bulk of the force that had been at Alexandria, leading the Egyptians to look out for his landing at Damietta; nor were they undeceived till a week later, when, on August 20th, Port Said and Suez, the two ends of the Canal, were simultaneously seized and occupied in strength, as noted, the former by Wolseley's force, and the latter by the Indian contingent under General Macpherson. Four days afterwards, on the 24th, a column of 8,000 men occupied the Port of Ismailia, on the Canal, lying midway between Port Said and Suez, and exactly east of Arabi's position at Zagazig and Tel-el-Kebir. Wolseley's column went forward at once from Ismailia, fought advanced guard actions with Arabi's army, and took up a position at Kassassin, within striking distance of the Egyptian position. There it

remained, clearing the neighbourhood and collecting its resources, till September 12th. Then by a night march it burst on Arabi at Tel-el-Kebir on the morning of the 13th, and totally routed his force. On that evening it seized the railway centres about Zagazig, capturing numerous trains, and next day Cairo surrendered to the force. Thus was the war finished at one blow.

It is advisable to touch on a feature of this war the grave importance of which is not always recognised. Arabi, in his measures for bringing on the war, meant to give it the character of a holy war and turn it into a crescentade—a widespread conflict of creeds—and he worked vigorously to rouse and to bring to his standard and support the Arab tribes on the east of the Suez Canal and in the Sinai Peninsula, and if possible all Arabia and Syria also. Only that narrow strip of canal separated all these possible allies from the impending theatre of operations. This danger, though kept in the dark, was realised in England, and steps were at once taken to secure the services of Mr. Edward Palmer, foremost of Orientalists and Arabian travellers, and with him Captain Gill, a traveller and a retired R.E., to proceed to the Sinai Peninsula and influence the tribes there to side with us instead of attacking us. This scheme was successfully carried out. Of the four great tribes that occupy that region, three had promised to side with us by protecting and patrolling the Canal and keeping off intruders. Only the fourth tribe showed a hostile tendency, and they were prevented by the other three from doing serious mischief, at any rate from going against us in a body or in any great numbers. How different it would have been if, for instance, they had been at Tel-el-Kebir to patrol during the night, in the front of the position, and so

avert a surprise! But unfortunately this fourth tribe managed to watch Palmer and Gill, attacking and killing them when taking treasure to the friendly tribes. They captured and then shot them in cold blood, on August 11th, in one of the wadies to the south-east of Suez.

To turn now to details and especially to Browne's part. He was C.R.E. (Commanding Royal Engineer) of General Macpherson's contingent, as already mentioned, with Captains Nicholson and Burn-Murdoch as his field Engineers, and four companies of Sappers and Pioneers from the several armies of India (Bengal, Punjab, Madras, and Bombay) under him. Before starting for Bombay he had made careful investigations and preparations for the work before him, especially in regard to the best modes of restoring railway communications that might there become interrupted; and had provided the necessary plant. In this he showed much real ability and great foresight, but there does not appear to have been any official recognition of the matter. He had reached Bombay on August 6th, and with Burn-Murdoch's assistance prepared all the material they were likely to require, including a 56-foot girder which could be taken to pieces and packed for carriage. Then off in steamers and transports to Suez.

While on board he managed a useful little piece of work. Getting hold of a quantity of ship's hose, he cut it up into proper lengths, for men and for horses respectively, and sewing up the ends, turned these into excellent water-bottles, carrying three days' supply for the march, slung round the men's shoulders, or tied round the horses' bodies like sausages.

The whole squadron reached Suez on the 20th,

and Browne and his party were immediately at work, putting into a state of defence against any sudden attack the principal local buildings and works, such as the Chalet, the Victoria Hospital, the Freshwater Canal, and so on. The force, including horses and material as well as men, had then to be landed; and much amusement occurred. Browne had already erected a substantial pier, and now there arose a demand for a gangway. Having nothing else available, he pounced on some suitable material lying on the bank without any visible claimant, promptly sawed it up into the needful parts, and made his gangway. Now comes on the scene the rightful owner, a naval officer! Tableau, and result! First—good strong nautical language; next—compliments on the excellent use and advantage to which the stolen goods had been put; eventually—a warm friendship!

Browne, too, was apparently the first person to use the gangway. A question had arisen of the mode of landing the horses, chucking them into the sea, or how. Now Browne was exceptionally fond of horses, and they of him, and he was at this juncture the happy owner of a very powerful and docile English mare; so he quietly led her himself ahead of all over the gangway, and the other steeds all followed her closely in a string without a mishap. The force from England had not managed their landing in this manner, but had used boats and barges.

From Suez Browne was first engaged in repairing the roads (to Geneffe and elsewhere), the local canals, and the railways lying to the north. In this task the preparations he had made in India and the plant he had brought with him stood him and the army in good stead, especially as Captain Wallace arrived



SIR W. G. NICHOLSON.

[*To face p.* 222.

shortly by the Canal from the Alexandria party, bringing a locomotive with him—so that Browne was presently going along the old line to Ismailia, repairing the track as he proceeded. The cavalry of the contingent had been sent off before he started, and there had been much chaff as to the messages they would give in advance; and now, *en revanche*, the engines, whistling and blowing off steam, rushed past the cavalry horses, fresh from board ship—with a result that need not be described.

The contingent presently moved to and collected at Ismailia and was kept there in the rear of the whole force till the final advance, and then only, for the first time, if one is to be guided by the official record, was its existence as part of the force recognised. But it had been first denuded of its cavalry, which had been sent ahead to join the cavalry division of the army at the front. While at Ismailia, Browne was kept hard at work, repairing roads and canals, and making accessory railway lines. At length, on September 6th, the contingent was warned of the impending advance, and on the 10th it started, with baggage and stores complete, for the front. On the 10th it reached Mahuta, and on the 11th Kassassin, whence, after a brief halt to prepare for the concerted action, it started on the night of the 12th for the next day's surprise and the series of battles of the 13th, which began at Tel-el-Kebir and went on to Zagazig or Cairo without a check or halt. The contingent started from a point which was in rear of the whole army; it had also to make a circuitous flanking movement round the Tel-el-Kebir mound, which, of course, lengthened its march. This was intentional, in order that it might not show too early to the villagers and others on the left flank that the

force had begun to advance. Fortunately its route was not over the deep, sandy, trackless desert plain which the main army had to traverse, but along the Canal bank, which formed a fair and marked roadway. The result of this was that, though the contingent had to march a greater distance than the rest of the army, it moved faster and reached the enemy's trenches as soon as the main army did, and was not subjected during the darkness to the same anxiety, fatigue, or uncertainty as to the route, and to the consequent halts and delays that troubled the main force. It accordingly came suddenly as a surprise on the enemy at their extreme right flank, which was weak and unsupported and consisted chiefly of gun pits. The enemy were consequently taken aback and tried to open fire when unprepared. One sixteen pounder shell did burst close to the general, but without doing any damage; and General Macpherson then went to work at once with the bayonet. His loss consequently was small. He first charged and took the gun pits and their guns, and then immediately afterwards two redoubts, farther on, where he captured fourteen guns. At the gun pits the enemy apparently tried to run out some of their guns into the open in order to get them nearer the Canal and to act on our flank, but Macpherson was too quick for them. The 72nd charged the lines splendidly, while Browne and Burn-Murdoch, being independent, kept on the extreme left, dashed by themselves at the guns there, and captured them; Browne never using his sword or other weapon, but upsetting the enemy like ninepins by the weight of his charger and the swish of her tail. He likened his steed to "an iron-clad rushing through a fleet of cockle shells." When the fight at Tel-el-Kebir itself was over, the enemy had already

begun to flee in the most open directions, most of them, including Arabi, towards Cairo, the rest towards Zagazig. The latter was the direction in which the Indian contingent was ordered to pursue vigorously, as it was evidently much less exhausted than the English force, which had had to plough its way over plains of sand.

So Macpherson pushed along beyond the battle-field, marching nearly thirty miles in the day's work, and seizing every opportunity for thoroughly completing and utilising the success. At an early stage of this pursuit Browne caught some of the enemy opening the Canal sluices, but soon stopped the attempt. The contingent forced its way on towards Zagazig, which it reached at four o'clock, preceded by its cavalry, a picked detachment, with Macpherson at its head, accompanied by his staff, including Browne and Burn-Murdoch. They were the first of the army to arrive at Zagazig. Burn-Murdoch, with some twenty of the Sowars (troopers), being the foremost of all, went straight for the railway station, where they caught a train as it was on the point of starting. He forced it to halt, having first to shoot the engine-driver, who had refused to do so. Nicholson, with another party, then captured four other trains complete with locomotives and stores; on which Browne sent one of them back under Burn-Murdoch to help the 72nd in for the last six miles—a great relief after the day's long and exhausting march.

The whole day's performance was wonderful, so thorough and clean, including as it did not only the victory at Tel-el-Kebir, but its effect in the capture next day of Cairo itself, and Macpherson's brilliant and successful seizure of Zagazig, which cut the railway system in two, at once paralysing the enemy and

dominating the position in every direction. The Indian contingent afterwards went on to Cairo, was especially reviewed, and attracted much attention—particularly that of the Russian attaché, who seemed thunderstruck with their appearance. "I had no conception you had such troops in India—I will never again call England a second-class military power. With such troops—fed by the millions of India—you could lay down the law to the world."

After the assault on Tel-el-Kebir there had been no fighting. While galloping along with Macpherson's party to Zagazig, the troops with him hardly meddled with the "Gippys," who were simply stampeding, and not attempting to fight or defend themselves. It seemed almost a farce, and drew forth the contemptuous anger of an old Sikh officer: "Call this war! No fighting, no slaughter—not even loot!"

A pleasant ending to Browne's experiences of this expedition was the R.E. dinner, in which some seventy of the corps joined. But he was then for a short time prostrated by a very severe attack of illness, before he could actually start on his return to India, as he did in the first week of October.

Before quitting the subject of the Egyptian war it may be permitted to remark on a few points that are suggested by the campaign, to which Browne was afterwards in the habit of referring.

There was no sign whatever of a fanatical feeling in the Egyptian soldiery or among the people generally. This was very striking to one who had had experience of this fanaticism among the Afreedees and the wild tribes on the north-west frontiers of the Punjab. Such efforts as Arabi may have made for his own ends to excite a fanatical feeling among his own troops or among the Arab race were quite fruitless,

and in the murder of Gill and Palmer lust of gold and not fanaticism was the real exciting cause.

Next, the Egyptian troops showed neither discipline nor valour. Nothing was more obvious than that Arabi's prevision for the organisation of his army had been wanting in all essentials and was worthless. Further, all the bravery of the race seems, for the time, to have evaporated, and it required a Kitchener to restore discipline and steady courage.

Browne, of course, took no part in these subsequent operations in Egypt; but he kept a keen watch over them, especially as so many of those concerned in them were old friends and brother officers, and it was with no small elation that he felt what grand work they were doing—Gordon at Khartoum and Wilson's efforts to reach him, Scott Moncrieff at the barrage of the Nile, Kitchener at his new army, Gerald Graham at the coast, Girouard and his desert railway. He appreciated the resolute, wise, steady stand against what to many seemed to be the irresistible advance of the Mahdi and his fanatic slave stealers, ruthlessly bent on throwing back for centuries the civilisation and the advancement of mankind which it has been so specially the aim and rôle of England to forward at all cost and all hazard.

Doubtless Browne often found himself wishing to play his part in these regions, but, after all, he was to be doing equally valuable work in India, building up the defences that were essential to the permanent safety and stability of the British rule of the country.

But from the day of Tel-el-Kebir English control and guidance has never left the soil of Egypt. At first the intention of the British was only to restore order, and in no way to interfere afresh in the affairs of the country, still less to go in for its military

occupation. But it was only now that the terrible rottenness of the country came clearly to light, and led to the present issue. The whole administrative machinery had to be overhauled and mostly reconstructed. The policy of the British officials, before the war, had been sound and wise, but they had no real power or support; and now they went at the task with a will, as far as they—*i.e.* Baring and the local authorities—were concerned, though only half-heartedly supported from England.

The story of the continuous efforts that eventually succeeded so thoroughly is too well known to need further description here. But it is important to recall all the past mishaps—the opposition to our steps for the suppression of slavery, the death of Gordon, the advance of the Mahdi, and then the eventual triumph of Kitchener, and the prosperity with which the land of Egypt has been gladdened.

That country has well added its quota to the evidence that able Englishmen in foreign lands, if let alone, can add immeasurably to the glory and honour of England; but if worried by ignorant interference, may, from their sense of loyalty and discipline and habits of obedience, submit to complications which with most nations could not be repaired.

CHAPTER XV

THE HURNAI RAILWAY: (i) 1882–3

SIMLA AFTER RETURN FROM EGYPT—THE HURNAI RAILWAY—PRELIMINARY MEASURES—THE CUTCHEE MESS—DIFFICULTIES OF THE ENGINEERING WORK.

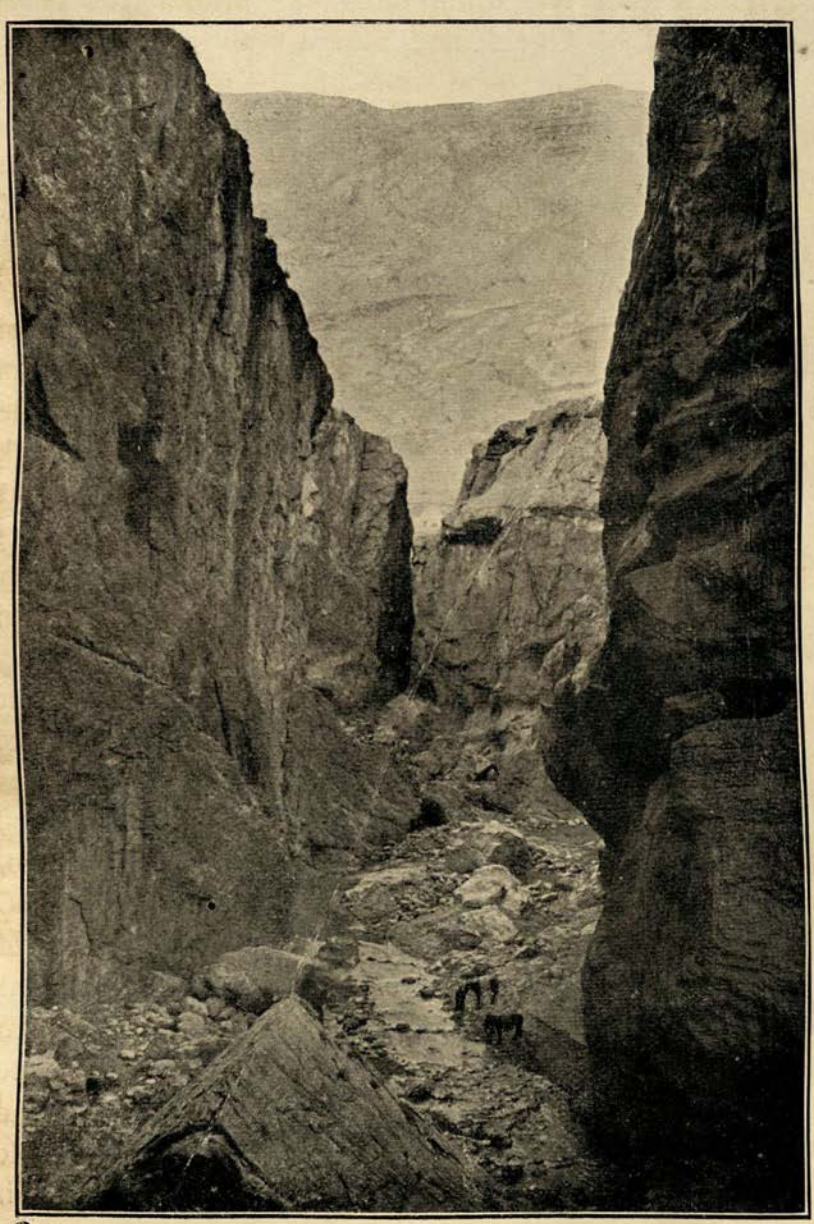
FOR the Egyptian campaign Browne was twice mentioned in dispatches, and received the C.B. and other honours He used to contrast sarcastically the numerous decorations given for this business with the solitary clasp which represented the far more real and arduous fighting of the Umbeyla struggle. Certainly this campaign gave no indication of the severities and difficulties of the subsequent African wars, which would have suited his bent more thoroughly—the Soudan, Suakim, Khartoum, South Africa.

On returning to India he rejoined the Military Works Office at Simla, and then found that he had been selected and had forthwith to prepare for a stupendous engineering task, the construction of the Hurnai Railway from the plains of Beloochistan to the Pesheen Plateau on the borders of Afghanistan. But for this nearly a year of preparation was necessary. Meanwhile Russia, with her customary astute diplomacy, was now (1883) taking advantage of England's difficulties in Africa to press her own interests in Asia and to advance towards Merv; while

in Africa matters were in a state of severe tension—Hicks's force was annihilated, the Mahdi had seized Bara and El Obeid, and Sinkat was separated from Suakim. At the same time, on the other hand, our relations with Afghanistan itself were improved; and the chief danger seemed, to experts, to lie in a tendency to conform in India to the Gladstonian sentiments that had characterised the Majuba policy.

Before, however, concluding this chapter of the closing features of the Egyptian war, one incident of Browne's stay at Simla may be mentioned. He was taking all the rest and amusement he could get, while setting to work at the preparations for his new task in the Military Office at Simla; and this lay, as usual with him, not in quiet repose, but in vigorous social amusements and in music. There was a very musical society at that time at Simla; concerts and oratorios were the rage, and there used to be weekly afternoon performances. Browne joined in the oratorios, but could not afford the time for practice or preparation; so that on one of these occasions he prolonged the chorus of "Stone him to death" in the oratorio of *St. Paul* by an additional solo, somewhat disturbing the gravity of the meeting, and leading to a bandsman's remark that the event of the concert had been "Colonel Browne's Brickbat Chorus." Then, at the ensuing weekly concert, when Browne entered the room he was greeted with "Stone him to death" from a dark corner of the room, and on going there to find out the delinquent, who should it prove to be but his old friend and leader, Sir Donald Stewart, the Commander-in-chief.

Selected as he had now been for the Hurnai task, his career, thenceforward, was never disconnected with the Russo-Afghan question, in one or more of



ROSEBERY VIEW, CHUPPUR RIFT.

[*To face p.* 230.

its branches or bearings. During the Egyptian war, and for a few months later, the difficulties in the political world continued. In India itself the situation had become very unpleasant. The Viceroy, Lord Ripon, one of the wisest and most far-seeing men that ever held that post, had been misled, and by his premature proposals for the Ilbert Bill, and the share to be assigned by it to educated natives in the administration and courts of the country, had seriously damaged his aim and greatly delayed the politic end he had in view; though he was still studiously carrying out some very valuable measures. No ruler ever left India so beloved, respected, and honoured by the native community of all ranks as did Lord Ripon. But in some points of practical administration, such as that of the frontier especially, he had occasionally allowed matters to slide, and to fall into untrained and unsuitable hands; and this, as it turned out, greatly affected the operations on which Browne was to be engaged before the year was over.

This chapter deals with the start of Browne's greatest feat in engineering, but the following introductory and preliminary remarks are meant to throw light not so much on the task itself as on the state of affairs in the Hurnai neighbourhood during the four years which had elapsed since Browne had last been there. There had been little change at first, or until the Afghan war came to an end. Then came our retirement, when the cessation of the war was characterised by exceptional scenes and episodes which will be shown presently, culminating in the destruction, sale, or removal of nearly all the arrangements and plant which had been organised or constructed for our connection with the Quetta and other hill districts.

This was suddenly checked by the aspect of affairs from the Russian quarter, and the consequent *volte-face* of our Government, stopping the withdrawals which had been begun, and restoring and increasing the facilities for a renewal of our recent occupation of those districts—and that in a more permanent fashion than before. The Bolan route for light traffic, under Colonel Lindsay, was one of the measures then taken in hand; while the Hurnai route, for heavy traffic, a much graver undertaking, was to be entrusted to Browne. His local experience and influence with the frontier men, and his exceptional and paramount power with the Ghilzyes in particular, besides his repute for mastering difficulties, had led to his selection for the task. Another point that carried weight towards this decision was that troubles with the Russians were again brooding—this time with reference to the delimitation of the boundary of Afghanistan; and an able and resolute soldier was needed to meet any special difficulties that might arise either locally or generally in the conduct of the important charge which the work was felt to be.

It has been mentioned that the line had been already reconnoitred and decided on. The circumstances under which this had been done were as follows. In Lord Lytton's usual fashion of selecting some special person, however unprofessional, for any extraordinary task, he had, in 1879, desired Sir Richard Temple, the Governor of Bombay, to proceed to Beloochistan, go to the Bolan Pass, see to the needs of the transport towards Candahar, cause a railway to be constructed across the Cutchee Plain to Sibi—a railway, that is, of a more permanent character than the temporary lines which had been, till then, carrying the needful war transport; and,

further, to investigate the question of the route for a railway for heavy traffic from the plains to Quetta.

Sir Richard's preliminary discussions with Colonel Sandeman, who, it will be remembered, was the ruler of Beloochistan before and during the Afghan war, had led him to concur fully in his view that the proposed railway could not be made through the steep passes of the Bolan; and therefore, at his suggestion and that of Colonel Lindsay, the local chief Engineer, he now examined, on horseback, the routes through the Hurnai passes. Starting from Sibi, to the west of which the Bolan lay, and trending first to the east and then circling round, he soon reached and went onwards by passes nearly parallel to the Bolan route, till eventually he reached the Pesheen Plateau. It may be incidentally noted that the wildness of the local tribes, and of the country defiles, made the journey one of serious danger, and demanded great care and watchfulness as well as boldness and resolution.

To reach the Pesheen Plateau, after traversing the Hurnai defiles, he had explored thence by side routes to the foot of the pass which led to it, and had then ascended upwards through the pass till he attained to the plateau itself. In so doing he detected the cross rifts between the parallel valleys, and it was this feature—the existence of the rifts—that seems to have guided Sir Richard to the plan or route which he proposed; but, as will be eventually seen, the task of negotiating those rifts in the course of the eventual work proved a stupendous one. Still it obviously gave an opening for a through line, at a reasonable slope—the essential desideratum for which his proposals were to provide, and for which no alternative

route could then be heard of or has ever since been suggested.

In due course he submitted his scheme or sketch proposals; and in the interval between that date and 1883 more detailed, but still only preliminary, surveys and proposals for the route and the work were sent to Government. But, as will be seen, and as was unavoidable under the circumstances, they were quite worthless and misleading as to the difficulties to be overcome, the gravity of the work to be carried out, and the cost that would be involved. Such was the stage of the engineering information when Browne was proposed for the charge of the undertaking.

Before leaving the subject of Sir Richard Temple's report, two points may be mentioned, not affecting that report, but bearing on the lines he dealt with. One is that when the war with Afghanistan broke out, in 1878, the nearest point of railway communication to Afghanistan was at Sukkur, where the railway from Lahore to Kurrachee crosses the Indus, and that its trains were taken then, and for some time afterwards, across that great river on steam ferries, there being no bridge there till many years afterwards. The other point is that, in continuation of the work done by Browne in 1876 in facilitating the crossing of the Cutchee Plain, Colonel Lindsay had carried his temporary railway to completion, and with great rapidity. But at the date which the story of Browne's career has now reached—*i.e.* when he was back at Simla and under orders to prepare for the Hurnai work—confusion had long been prevailing in those border districts ever since the close of the Afghan war. This unhappy circumstance was consequent on the change of ministry in England and of the viceroyalty in India, accompanied by the exaggerated sentiments, the

bitter spirit, and the drastic action that ensued on and characterised the change. The attitude seemed to imply a desire not for construction, but for destruction, for the sweeping away, as it were, of some disgraceful episode. The railways and tramways were torn up and all existing transport arrangements were set aside. In fact, while Lord Roberts was being glorified in England, the results of his and Stewart's successes in India were being treated as if sheer oblivion was the only future they merited. Rails and plant, invaluable for the task that Browne would soon have to undertake, were being sold off for a song, and had in a few months to be replaced at fabulous prices under the emergency that had then arisen.

Browne had of course become aware very early of the policy and characteristics of Lord Ripon's rule, and of the instructions with which he had undertaken his high office—the policy of hasty withdrawal, and the orders that Candahar and Quetta were to be given up, and with them the incomplete or temporary railways. As a fact, Candahar was absolutely abandoned, but happily the logic of facts and his own good sense were stronger with Lord Ripon than even his sense of allegiance to Mr. Gladstone's policy; and hence the withdrawal of the British troops stopped short at Quetta, which was after all retained as the capital of the frontier province and the basis of the frontier defence.

Such, as have now been described, were the antecedents of the Hurnai project when Browne returned from Egypt to Simla early in 1883, and was warned that he would have the charge of the undertaking. At first the aspect of affairs did not seem to lead to any more serious idea than that the task would be

a very heavy and difficult one, and while he was still at work on the Defence Committee, his special preparations for the Hurnai fitted in very conveniently with the duties of his actual post.

Soon, however, the aspect changed, quite apart from the confusion in the Cutchee itself. The Russians' advance from their more westerly position towards Merv had been going on in a somewhat treacherous manner, and with false avowals of their real intentions; till towards the end of 1883 it began to be clearly seen that the Russian general, apparently a Mahomedan adventurer named Alikhanoff, was coercing the people of Merv and its neighbourhood, so as to form a basis or starting-point for more advanced operations, and to come within striking distance of the positions that intervened between Merv and Herat. On this now becoming obvious, the preparations for starting the Hurnai work were hastened on; and one of the points arranged was that the work, though an Engineer operation, should be under the Military, and not the Public Works Department of the Government, and should be conducted under the guidance of the Commander-in-chief, Sir Donald Stewart.

But Browne's preparations had to be more and more expedited, and expanded so as to include measures not previously contemplated, and all these were carried on in full concert with Sir Donald Stewart and, in many matters, at his suggestion. The essential features of the arrangements for Browne's conduct of the work were these: his one imperative aim, to which all else was to be subordinated, was to drive on the work with the greatest speed possible, so as to complete the task by the earliest date in his power; he was not to be hampered with the customary official work, including the claims of

estimates; he was to have at least one brigade of troops for the protection of the work, and to command it with the rank and the customary authority of a brigadier; he was to have a considerable body of Sappers and Miners and of Pioneers as part of his brigade; and he was to be wholly uncontrolled and untrammelled in his conduct of the work, and to have an absolutely free hand. These were great, unusually great, powers; but they were necessary for even the happiest conditions under which the task could be carried on.

But, as will be seen, wholly unforeseen and portentous difficulties arose, amounting to catastrophes, which rendered the work one of quite extraordinary difficulty.

Browne, on preparing to start, was, as has been mentioned, to be free from all the customary routine of Public Works business, owing to the emergency of the case. He was in the position of a chief Engineer as regards work and responsibility, but he was never provided either at first or afterwards with the customary establishment office and officers for a chief Engineer's charge, owing obviously at first to the understanding that he was not to be hampered with the customary office duties of the post. It was to be essentially an urgent piece of war engineering to be carried through as rapidly as possible.

It must be very clearly and explicitly understood that when the task was assigned to Browne, and when he left Simla to start the work, the matter was entirely a military undertaking, and lay in the hands of the military members of the Viceroy's Council, and still more of Sir Donald Stewart, from whom both officially and personally he received full instructions and advice on all points. It was a work of *military* urgency, and,

as already noted, estimates for it were not to be an essential matter any more than for the expenses of war; speed! speed! again speed! was the essential desideratum.

But owing, it may be assumed, to some special exigencies of the state, Browne had no sooner left Simla than an entire revolution in the arrangements took place; another member was added to the Council of the Viceroy and put in control of the Public Works Department, to which, too, the Hurnai Railway was suddenly transferred from the Military Department, under which it had heretofore been fully arranged that it should be carried out. Hence Browne, on reaching Sibi, whence the railway was to start, found that he was not to be under Sir D. Stewart or the Military Department, but under the new special member for Public Works; and that the arrangements, conditions, and understandings settled with Sir Donald and the Military Secretariat were to be ignored, especially in respect of Browne's own latitude and freedom from control in details. This entirely altered Browne's position, doing away with the powers which had been promised and were requisite, without, on the other hand, lessening his responsibility for the results.

It may be assumed that public exigencies, arising chiefly from the Russian storm cloud, had made it necessary to have this additional member and to place Browne's charge under him; but it was a pity that the exceptional position of that charge was not explicitly recorded by Government. This omission, however, was only one symptom of the general confusion that prevailed.

Browne had of course been aware that this muddling had been prevalent, but he had hoped that his position under the Military Department would have saved

him from being affected by it; and he now raised no decided objection to the change, trusting, of course, that the great feature of the arrangement, freedom from interference, would be adhered to; but, unfortunately, this was not to be. His new chief, zealous and energetic, and with the enthusiasm of an amateur, began interfering from the very start in details respecting chiefly the business arrangements; and Browne, trusting to an improvement on these points in the course of time, and relying on the support of those by whom he had heretofore been guided, drove on the actual work as hard as he could. This was the essential need—other matters he left to time; but he could not help the delay or the extra outlay entailed by the new arrangements, to which he had at once objected, in the conduct of the enterprise. It is to be understood that when Browne joined at Sibi he learnt at once that he was to be under—not Stewart—but the new member of Council. But it was only by degrees that he learnt or found what this meant—viz. that the free hand, the basis of his position, was to be first of all ignored, next discountenanced, thirdly paralysed, and lastly upset. Hence Browne, acting on the principle of the superior claims of the urgency of the needs of the state, while endeavouring to carry out the orders he received from time to time, steadily and undeviatingly carried on his work at the utmost speed, so as to complete it at the earliest possible date, in despite of all difficulties and obstructions.

When, however, he was transferred from military control to that of the Public Works Department, it may be at once said that he looked forthwith at such estimates as already existed, and found them wholly unreliable and useless, as the works that were now found to be absolutely necessary

exceeded, to a degree that cannot be adequately described, what had been provided for in those preliminary estimates.

It may be mentioned here, as a matter personally affecting Browne, that with this new task—the Hurnai Railway—he was being advanced from the *executive* duties and grades of the service to the highest class of responsible functions under the Government, of which he was to hold three in succession. The first was this one, the charge of the construction of the Hurnai Railway, which was of itself to involve four functions of grave responsibility—Engineer, Military, Administrative, and Diplomatic, or Political, as it is called in India. The next of the three posts was that of Quartermaster-General of the army, directly under the Commander-in-chief; and the third was the Government of Beloochistan, which involved a still wider range of duties and responsibilities than even the Hurnai Railway, and which ended with his death, after a short and sudden illness.

As Browne was now about to start the operations, the position must be clearly and explicitly stated. Without any idea of an impending change in the supervising department, he had, when asked if he would undertake the task, expressed his willingness to do so on conditions, which had been fully and heartily agreed to—viz. that his funds were to be unlimited, that he was not to be cramped by estimates nor by sanctioned designs, and that the speedy execution of the work was the one essential desideratum. A particular feature of the case that—in truth—made these conditions an absolute necessity was the wholly unknown character and nature of the work that would have to be carried out in that part of the undertaking which had to pierce the rift

section of the projected route and to tunnel through that deep barrier of limestone rock.

While Browne was to carry out the broad gauge line for *heavy* traffic through the Hurnai passes, Colonel Lindsay, it may be mentioned, was to construct at the same time the light Bolan line. Both were to start from Sibi at the foot of the mountains, diverging there to re-unite at Quetta, the two lines forming an oval, with the stations of Sibi and Bostan at the opposite ends; the length of the Hurnai line, which was never to exceed a fixed maximum gradient, being about double that of the Bolan, which was to have steeper gradients and carry only light traffic. The limit of the gradients of the Hurnai was fixed at 1 in 45 and the minimum radius for curves was 600 feet. Browne's own sketch of Lindsay's line will be found in the next chapter.

In October, 1883, Browne started his operations for the construction of the railway. The urgency of the work and of the position has been already dwelt on, but it may be further explained that this urgency was based less on the danger from any hostile features in the movements that had already occurred on the part of the Russians than on that of the strategical position which the Russian advance had reached and of the facilities it afforded for further and rapid aggression. They had not yet reached Merv, though they were approaching it. But they had coerced Persia on the west, and would not allow either her or Afghanistan on the east and south to occupy any longer some of the sites they had always previously held, and General Komaroff was now planted in the Tejend oasis with a brigade. The Simla Government judged correctly of the military significance of the position, and of the probability of a very sudden

advance by the Russians in force, with the customary accompaniment of claims to the sovereignty of the tracts reached in the advance. Hence the need for the summary stoppage of that destruction, which had been going on, of the facilities for transport; for fresh construction instead, for the strengthening of the frontier; and for vigorous progress with the Hurnai.

Browne, on reaching Sibi, naturally looked forthwith into the existing state of matters and the proposals that had been already made for the work to be done; and took a rapid trip over the route. During the few months of that cold weather the actual construction work that could be started—in which he was much hampered by official interference—had to be confined to the lower sections of the line, but equally important business work could be carried on for the whole line in respect of the collection of workmen and staff, of the designs for the bridges, and of arrangements or the supply of the ironwork from England. As the promised Pioneer and other regiments joined him, and he began to post them to their duties, there was at first, somewhat naturally, a tendency to minimise his military control; but his tact, common sense, thorough military instincts, and old experiences, at once put matters on a sound footing. So that not only did no hitch ever occur in the employment of the troops from first to last, but it was recognised before long that their physique, discipline, and health had benefited, and their spirit was excellent. The strength of these troops, small at first, was shortly raised to that of a full brigade, and this proved to be no empty arrangement, from a military point, as some had at first expected; for their presence did, in fact, actually avert and prevent any single instance

of molestation from the wild Kakur and other marauding tribes of the neighbourhood.

We have noted above the state of affairs in regard to the Russian advance on the north-east of Afghanistan during 1883, at the start and in the first year of Browne's work on the Hurnai; but latterly the anxiety in regard thereto had begun to diminish in consequence of the arrangements now in progress for the formal settlement and alignment of the boundaries near Penjdeh. So, leaving that subject, we may turn to Browne's own work and describe the duties which he had to carry out in the course of the task before him.

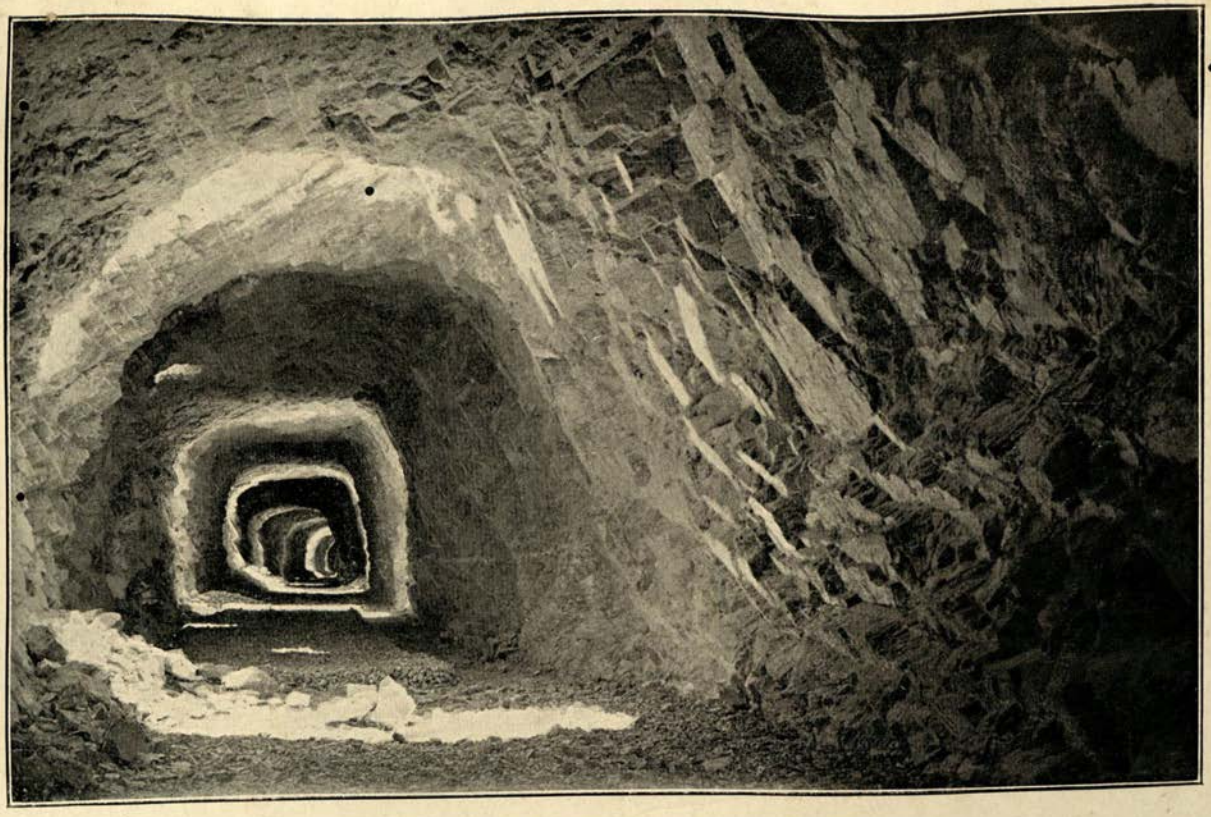
Its engineering features and its special difficulties may be first dealt with. The work and the climate were so exceptional that he could not assign to his officers any permanent charges and spheres of work; for, instead of being constant, these had to change with the season. In the winter they were assigned work in the lower sections of the route; in the summer they were transferred to the higher and cooler level, while Browne, himself seeming impervious to climatic difficulties, moved about or halted according as the exigencies of the work and the calls of his officers demanded. So serious were the difficulties, so great the breakdown in health, as will be shown in greater detail, so wild the country and so unfit for large bodies of labourers or employees, so overwhelming the catastrophes that occurred, that the pluck and determination which carried it all through must seem beyond all praise.

To turn now to the engineering task before Browne. It may be thus described. The height above the sea level at the base, Sibi, is about 300 feet; at the summit level near Kach, 120 miles from Sibi the height is

6,500 feet. The construction of a broad gauge line over so great a height in so short a distance was a task hitherto unknown in any part of the world, except in Peru, and there were, in the case of this particular line, certain circumstances which offered peculiar difficulties. The line had to traverse no such lovely scenery as is found in Switzerland, where the railway passes from one scene of Alpine peacefulness to another, where the inhabitants are industrious and law-abiding, and where the climate is fairly temperate and at least bearable and salubrious. The country from Sibi to Garkhai is a rugged wilderness of rocks and stone, with hardly a blade of grass the whole way, excepting some small patches near Hurnai and Sharigh, where cultivation in 1883 extended round a few watch-towers as far as the range of the watchman's matchlock. There the people were continually engaged in plunder and intertribal warfare—every man's hand was against that of his neighbour. As regards the climate, the intense heat of the rocky gorges, on the lowest parts of the line, during the summer months, was only a little less endurable than the bitter cold of the upper passes in winter. The temperate zone of the line, near Hurnai and Sharigh, though enjoying a more equable climate, was shunned and dreaded on account of the malaria and pestilence which seemed to be always infesting it.

The engineering difficulties might be divided into four groups: (1) The Nari Gorge; (2) the Gundakinduf Defile; (3) the Chuppur Rift; (4) the summit portion, including the Mud Gorge.

(1) The Nari Gorge extended from the place where the Nari River debouches on the plains for some fourteen miles. The whole of this wild gorge is



TUNNELS ALONG EDGE OF THE CHUPPUR RIFT.

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formed by the tortuous channel of the Nari River, a stream some 300 yards wide in flood, with a depth of about 10 feet and a velocity of some 5 feet a second. It is particularly subject to violent floods at irregular intervals. The railway crosses the Nari five times in the course of these fourteen miles, and at other places pursues a tortuous course round the bends of the gorge.

(2) The Gundakinduf Defile is only some eight miles long, but involves two tunnels through most treacherous material, and four large bridges.

(3) The Chuppur Rift is in the higher region of the line. It is a chasm some two and a half miles long joining two parallel valleys. Down this chasm, which in some parts is only a few yards wide and 300 feet high, a small stream flows over a boulder-strewn bed, with a longitudinal slope of 1 in 20. As the ruling gradient of the railway is 1 in 45, the entrance at the lower end had to be arranged for at a great height above the bed of the stream, so as to enable the line to issue at a proper level at the upper end. This work involved a crowd of tunnels (aggregating over a mile in length), and one large bridge 290 feet above the stream below.

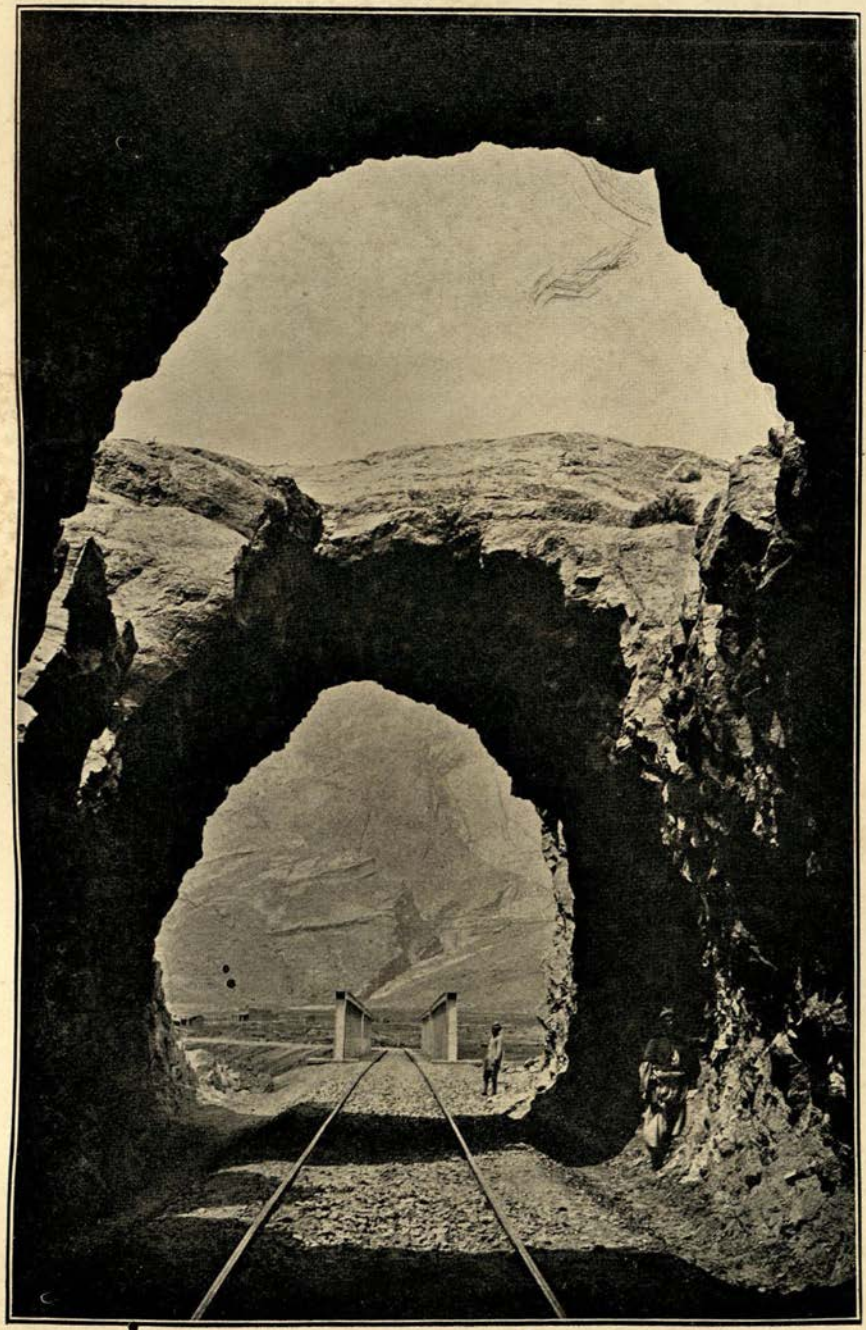
(4) The summit portion, some twenty-five miles in length, had in it the most difficult part of the line—viz. a length of five miles along "Mud Gorge," where a narrow valley between precipitous mountains, and with a fairly steep longitudinal slope, was filled with soil of an exceedingly treacherous nature, and of most irregular contour. Beyond this the rugged character of the mountain necessitated many heavy works, and a most careful examination of all possible routes, so as to cross the summit with the least work.

Browne decided that during the cold weather

season, from October to April, attention should be specially directed to the works in the Nari Gorge and Gundakinduf Defile, while in the summer months the difficult portions in the higher parts of the line would be negotiated. It thus came to pass that certain of his officers were in charge of two distinct parts of the line, work on which (though never absolutely at a standstill) was carried on at the period of the year when the weather was most favourable for progress.

During the summer of 1884 attention was chiefly directed to the survey and tunnel work in the Chuppur Rift, the alignment of the summit portion and much of the earthwork there, and the survey of the last thirty-three miles into Quetta. There was a good deal of sickness, fever, and scurvy among the workmen and troops, but on the whole the work had gone on without much hindrance.

With the autumn months and the beginning of the campaign new difficulties cropped up in the lower part of the line. Fresh troops had now come to aid in the work—three full battalions of Pioneers—but hardly had they entered on the scene when cholera made its dire appearance. The result was a most serious stoppage of the works at a time when the weather was lovely and most favourable for pushing everything on. The Afghan workmen made a regular stampede, followed by many skilled artisans from various parts of India. To replace these losses Captain Moncrieff was sent to collect labour in the Eastern Punjab, and returned on the scene with some two or three hundred masons and bricklayers, but not until grievous delays had been caused and much precious time wasted. Then sickness broke out among many of the Engineers.



MOUTH OF A CHUPPUR RIFT TUNNEL.

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Two army corps were now warned in India for mobilisation at the front, near Quetta, and the railway works under Brigadier-General Browne were ordered to be pushed on with the utmost dispatch. All the three Pioneer regiments under his command were to assemble in the Pesheen Valley and await further orders.

While in the midst of this intense pressure, Nature seemed to join with other forces to present difficulties in the progress of the works. Floods, the most violent and unexpected, suddenly burst upon them at the beginning of April, sweeping away bridges and miles of temporary roads, interrupting communication for days, rendering camping-grounds unfit for use, and making the supply of food most difficult. Yet the work went on. The Pioneer brigade assembled at its rendezvous with only some twenty sick out of 2,000, all equipped and ready for anything.

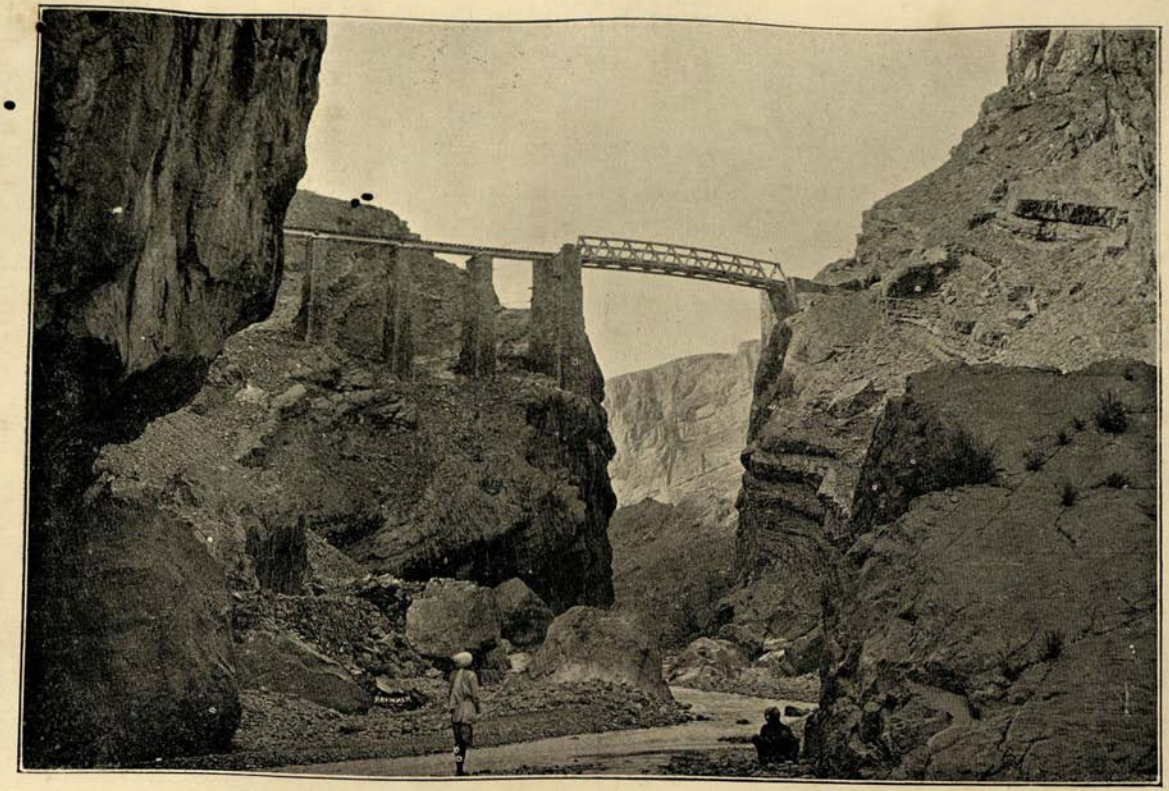
CHAPTER XVI

THE HURNAI RAILWAY: (ii) 1883–7

THE DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN THE WORKS OF THE HURNAI RAILWAY—ITS CONSTRUCTION—THE OPENING CEREMONY.

WE may now proceed with the more important particulars of the work, of which we have just given a general sketch: first touching again on that section of that great oval route which was constructed on the narrow gauge and was under Colonel Lindsay's charge.

Colonel Lindsay's Bolan Railway was undertaken at a time when the political outlook rendered it necessary to mobilise a portion of the Indian army. The project was prepared by Colonel Lindsay, R.E., for laying down the rails on the surface of the Bolan Pass, which practically is the bed of the Bolan River, dry for the greater part of the year, but liable to floods. Colonel Lindsay was compelled to surrender charge of the work on account of an accident, and was succeeded by Mr. O'Callaghan, C.I.E., by whom it was carried to its completion under great difficulties, owing to the unhealthy season of 1885. The line runs for the first forty miles with a fairly good gradient, and, although liable to be flooded in the lower part of the Pass, is in ordinary seasons an excellent working railway. The steep gradient in the



LOUISE MARGARET BRIDGE, CHUPPUR RIFT.

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higher part of the Pass prohibits the construction of a broad gauge line, and the last part is on the metre gauge up a very steep incline. From the top of the Pass, about 6,000 feet, it runs in the level up to Quetta. It is now proposed to substitute for this narrow gauge portion a broad gauge line on another system, a development of that with which visitors to the Righi are familiar, and when this latter is carried out there will be two lines of broad gauge from India to Beloochistan.

To turn now to Colonel Browne's line. He had joined at Sibi to start the arrangements and work in October, 1883. He had, as above stated, arranged to organise the collection of labour, material, and supplies, and to begin the work itself in the lowest of the sections—Sibi to Nari; to concentrate the labour in the warmer sections and localities in the winter, and to change thence to the higher and cooler spots in the summer. This answered perfectly, except in respect of outbreaks of cholera, which seemed to be affected less by climate than by the large gatherings at various spots from time to time of troops and followers and Commissariat, with their attendants, supplies, and transport for the frontier posts at and about Quetta.

We have noted that in consequence of departmental changes Browne found himself at once hampered by intolerable checks, interferences, and prohibitions. The initial auxiliary works, always customary as conducive to economy both of time and money, such as tram lines, rolling stock, etc., were prohibited, leading at once to an enormous loss, owing to the consequent unavoidable substitution of camel carriage. Even the acquisition and use of the juniper forests, which provided the only wood

that grew in those parts, were disallowed, however judicious the arrangement, and however acceptable to the people. In every sort of point, in fact, which should be left to the chief Engineer and in which he should have a free hand, he was dealt with as if only an executive—nay, as if only an assistant—Engineer, and was kept under inquisition and restrained by orders from an unskilled and unqualified control, with the natural results of delay and expense and confusion. There was even much time lost, from the same cause, before he was supplied with instruments or survey appliances, though this surveying (preparatory to designing and estimating the operation) was obviously as essential work as any that there could be, at the start.

After, however, Browne had joined his work and found that his masters were changed, and that he was likely to have to think more of his estimates, he suited his arrangements and work to the state of the case, and sent in the customary "preliminary sketch estimates" without any avoidable delay. But, at the same time, he stated and showed first that, without any doubt whatever, these were of no value at all; and next that no estimates could, by any possibility, be prepared that would at all be a useful guide to the eventual cost until close on completion.

At the outset, however, the interference described did not last for more than the first three months. In that time, owing to Browne's energy, good communication was made up to the first point of serious difficulty; and in six months—*i.e.* by the end of March, 1884, when the weather began to get hot—three tunnels were in full progress, the foundations of numerous bridges had been securely laid, contracts for work

and machinery had been entered into, and enormous quantities of rock work had been carried out. But, as will be seen, the interference was afterwards resumed, and with greater virulence.

It has been shown that the arrangements and understanding which were agreed to by the Government before Browne left Simla to start the work of the line included this provision—that he was to push on the line as rapidly as possible without waiting for the estimates. It had all been fully discussed, and there was no sort of doubt about the meaning of the instruction or understanding. There was not to be any omission or neglect of estimating—and, in fact, there were estimates framed from the very beginning, but undeniably these were quite useless—and, under the political exigencies of the case, speed in the construction of the line was the primary and essential necessity, estimates and similar matters of ordinary departmental routine being left to be carried out as speedily as the circumstances of such an exceptional case might admit. These instructions were frequently repeated to him from high quarters, from time to time, as a *bona fide*, though not official matter.

There was difficulty again raised later on about this preparation of estimates; for the whole nature of the work, and of the route even, when once finally known, with its miles of tunnels, made it quite certain that it must be impossible to foresee at any time what the details of the works with their invisible sites must be, or to prepare, until close on completion, estimates that could serve any useful purpose, or give a clue to the eventual cost. This subject is dealt with later on separately, in order to prevent its interfering with the general narrative of the work. With these remarks we quit here the subject of the estimates.

To turn to the work itself, the Hurnai line was one that involved many classes of engineering difficulties, which have been already indicated, and may be summed up as follows:

The known difficulties lay in the inaccessibility of the sites both generally and in detail; the gravity and variety of the engineer work involved, and the impossibility of examining and realising its details beforehand; the barren, mountainous, and desert character of the route of the line; the wild and warlike character of the sparse population that occupied it; the necessity for importing everything, whether in the shape of supplies, of labour, or of material and machinery; the narrowness and depth of the defiles; the force and fluctuations of the rivers and torrents that traversed them; the want of space; the excessive graduations of height; and lastly, the great variations of temperature, which severely affected the workpeople.

Besides these there were the unknown difficulties that eventually developed and are dealt with at greater length farther on; arising from the excessive rainfall and the consequent floods sweeping away the works and plant time after time, especially in the earlier stages; and then the outbreaks of sickness, such as virulent and continuous cholera, fever, and scurvy. These epidemics were brought about, it is supposed, or at any rate increased, by the great gatherings of Commissariat cattle and of troops and their followers, in the roads and grounds in the near neighbourhood, at and *en route* to Quetta, in expectation of war.

But engineering difficulties were not the only ones encountered in this great undertaking. On a line which runs from nearly one of the hottest parts in India, only a

little above the level of the sea, to a height some thousands of feet greater than that of any railway in the world, great extremes of heat and cold were unavoidably experienced. The thermometer has been known to register in the Nari Valley as much as 118° Fahr. in the house, while on the higher part of the work it has been as low as 18° below zero in the verandah during the winter. The cold was so great as to prevent the laying of the permanent way, rails snapping from the frost.

Political and military difficulties were also expected, but they did not arise, or at any rate prove serious; which was probably due, in a measure at least, to Browne's special and mysterious influence with the natives, and especially the Ghilzyes.

To these must be further added those very serious difficulties that were from time to time occasioned by climatic and special causes.

In August and September, 1884, the last months of the first year of work—a very early stage of the enterprise—came, alas! the first great check to progress—in the appearance of a regular plague of sickness, fever, and scurvy (but not cholera) among the workpeople and the staff, of whom large numbers died, while the rest were so prostrated as to be fit for very little work. Sixty per cent., for instance, of the Sappers were in the hospital.

Then in November, the beginning of the second year of work, matters grew from bad to worse, and severe cholera appeared; labour was greatly weakened, and *all* the Afghans deserted! This cholera reappeared in the following May (1885) and spread severely, Captain Ewen Cameron, R.E., a very valuable officer on the Bolan Road, falling a victim to it. On the Hurnai itself Mr. Sullivan, the bridging

contractor, Mr. Phillips, a New York engineer in charge of the tunnelling apparatus, and the platelaying contractor, Mr. Barnes—all these valuable engineers of the line and many others died and were lost to the work. This great sickness continued in June, in which month fourteen out of twenty-four officers were crushed with fever; while some whole classes of employees, such as the telegraph and post office clerks, fled in a body, and work was stopped for the time. After a while these exceptionally serious epidemics ceased; the milder customary illnesses, however, continuing as a matter of course.

But in this same year, *1885*, the second year of excessive sickness, there appeared another great and unexpected cause of loss, delay, and trouble, in the occurrence of floods of unheard-of force. They began early in the year, and were due to a continuous rainfall during its first three months, far exceeding any that had been experienced for sixty years. Till then the average of the usual rainfall for four months had been 3 inches. In 1883 it had been 2·28 inches, and in 1884 it had been 4·89 inches; but in this year, 1885, it amounted in those three months to 19·27 inches, or 8½ times what was expected! A veritable deluge!

The last of the heavy floods that consequently ensued lasted for six days in April. It swept away several bridges and many miles of temporary roads, caused numerous accidents, and did an infinity of mischief, destroying camping-grounds, giving rise to malaria, and stopping the supply of food.

Then after an interval of five weeks the floods again came down, more severe than ever; the temporary bridges that had been erected were swept away, and the line was cut in two; and this state of suc-

cessive catastrophes went on without cessation till the end of May. Then, however, it stopped, and nothing so serious ever occurred again.

The Press occasionally showed its wisdom and knowledge, and suggested that Browne might have foreseen these floods—"The veriest tyro would be expected to know of their annual occurrence!" Obviously there are floods and floods!

Some personal sketches of the work may now be conveniently given, occasionally including some of Browne's, but arranged chiefly with regard to the order of the route.

"GENERAL FEATURES.—A railway which starts at a level of about 500 feet above the sea, and rises to an elevation of 6,800 feet, must necessarily present great difficulties in execution; besides, the features of this inhospitable region are exceptionally formidable. Just beyond the little village of Nari, a few miles from Sibi, the first of the great difficulties on the line had to be encountered. Here three considerable streams unite to form the Nari, and, although having but little water in ordinary seasons, are torrents in time of flood, filling up the whole gorge for some miles, and involving an immense quantity of heavy embankments, tunnels, and cuttings. Yet for many months the work of the engineers halted, as their half-complete embankments, with the staging and scaffolding of their bridges, were washed away, and until the line could be completed through this gorge, permanent way and other materials could not be carried forward to the upper part of the line. This is one of the most weird tracts through which a railway has ever been carried. The hills, absolutely bare, rise above the valley for many thousands of feet in fantastic pinnacles and cliffs. It is a scene of wildest desolation.

"At Kuchali also a very dangerous tunnel had to be made. So many casualties occurred, owing to the tunnel falling in, that at last no workmen could be got to enter it, except at a rate of wage fivefold that of even the high rate prevailing on the line.

"THE CHUPPUR RIFT.—The Nari gorge traversed, the line ascends along a mountain valley presenting no difficulties greater than are ordinarily met with in mountain lines until the Chuppur Rift is reached, a curious freak of nature which will certainly before long become a favourite place of interest for Indian tourists. Here the great spurs of a rocky mountain many hundred feet in height cross the drainage of the country and present apparently a perfectly insuperable barrier. On close approach there appears, however, a great rift transverse to the line of mountain, several hundred feet high, and with just width enough for laden camels to pass along the stony bed, through which the waters there, from what might have been an extensive lake, now find their way. In dry seasons the bottom of the rift presents merely the appearance of a very narrow rocky stream, difficult but not impracticable for a horseman; but in floods a grand volume of water rushes through with a depth of from 30 to 40 feet. The character of the rock forbids the idea of traversing it by means of a ledge, and the plan adopted was that of two lines of continuous tunnels, one on each side of the rift, ending at points opposite and on a level with each other, where they are connected and the rift is spanned by an iron girder bridge. To have constructed these tunnels in the ordinary way from either end would have involved a great expenditure of time owing to the extreme hardness of the rock, and it was determined to effect the task by means of the combination of a number of adits or approaches or short tunnels from the precipitous sides of the rift, with the interior passages, and it is in the construction of these that the engineers and workmen were called on to display a degree of physical courage as great as is ever needed in any operation of life. The only way of making these adits or subsidiary tunnels was by letting down workmen with ropes from the top of the cliff several hundred feet above the point of operation. The first man down had to gain a footing by driving a crowbar into the perpendicular wall; after the first crowbar others were driven in, and then a platform was erected from which blasting operations could begin. So singular and difficult a piece of engineering has probably seldom

or never been accomplished before, and the name of the gallant officer, Captain Buchanan Scott, who led the way in this perilous task, deserves perpetual record in connection with the work. Six openings were made on one side of the cliff for one tunnel and six on the other, and galleries driven into them till points were reached from where the main tunnel could be constructed right and left, so that the work could be carried on by fourteen separate gangs; and in this way the whole tunnel was blasted out in a few months.

"LOUISE MARGARET BRIDGE.—The tunnel completed, there remained the erection of the girder, and this is about 220 feet above the bed of the gorge. The erection of it was not the least of the difficulties overcome by the ingenuity and energy of General Browne and Captain Scott. This is the bridge which was opened by H.R.H. the Duchess of Connaught, the first lady, we believe, who ever visited the spot, and was named "Louise Margaret" in her honour. The elevation of the Chuppur Rift is about 5,300 feet or one mile above the sea; from thence the line rises with a ruling gradient of 1 in 45 till the summit level of 6,800 feet is reached, first, however, passing through another very difficult point known as Mud Gorge. Here the difficulty is not rock, but a mountain mass which is little better than hard mud, which had already made several bad slips carrying away the whole of the line, and threatening more slips in the future. It will be some time before the *régime* of Mud Gorge will be thoroughly established, and the line attain a tone of durability."

Another sketch runs thus:

"From the summit level of 6,800 feet the line descends o the rocky pass or gorge of Garkhai, 5,700 feet, where t emerges on the elevated tableland of Pesheen, and hence proceeds on a fairly level line to the foot of he Khwaja Amran range, which separates Pesheen rom Afghanistan. At Bostan, twenty miles from Garkhai, a branch runs back to Quetta twenty miles, nd on the top of the Bolan Pass twenty-five miles farther on."

A third sketch is as follows:

"The greater part of the country traversed is almost without inhabitants, who do not grow enough food for their own consumption. For miles and miles there is no scene of vegetation, so that the whole of the workmen had to be fed by supplies brought from a distance, and the feeding of the large gangs, who averaged about 30,000 men on the works for many months, had to be arranged for. The popular notion that malaria is due to vegetation in tropical countries is dispelled on learning that these desolate tracts, without a bush or blade of grass, have been the scene of fever surpassing in virulence anything within ordinary Indian experience. The whole line of the work is dotted with stones to mark the graves of the unfortunate wretches whom the high wages offered have attracted from their homes in India or Afghanistan. In one gang of 200 workmen the deaths from fever for a long time were recorded at the average rate of ten per day. In other words, the whole gang would have died out, if not renewed, in about three months. It is almost needless to add that the European engineers have had no immunity from illness; many have left with shattered constitution, and those that remain are all more or less worn out by sickness, fatigue, and climate."

Further remarks are not needed in regard to the construction of the line, and we may therefore now revert to the subject of the estimates, which have been already touched on.

On this subject "it would," Browne had said, "be as impossible for me to estimate what the Hurnai Railway would cost as it would be for Lord Salisbury to estimate what it might cost England to go to war with Russia." Having examined the route and considered the nature of the ground and localities involved, he had come with perfect justice and sound wisdom to this conclusion and announced it boldly.

The subject is too technical to deal with fully in these pages; but it may be said at once that, as in spite of all Browne's statements and their support by his professional superiors some of the very high officials were not satisfied with the absence of any estimate on which they could rely for guidance, an inquiry was instituted in 1886, and the experts engaged made a report which, instead of censuring, led to commendation, and to Browne being honoured with the K.C.S.I.

The worry and anxiety all this had entailed on Browne, when already burdened with the tremendous difficulties of his task, cannot be adequately described, and would probably have crushed any one else. To those who were then cognisant of the state of matters it was a marvel that he could bear up against it as he did.

But a few further remarks regarding the estimates so persistently demanded, in spite of Browne's statements and explanation, may perhaps be usefully added. The estimates which he said he could not then prepare are what are technically called detailed estimates, in which the cost of each work or item is shown, arrived at by giving the dimensions and then multiplying the quantities of work involved by the rates at which it is assumed such work can be carried out. This is simple and straightforward when the dimensions are certain and the rates well known or settled by contract; but it is quite otherwise when, as in the present case, the sites of the individual works, their details, their foundations, the character of the rocks to be tunnelled, and all such data for guidance in the engineering were entirely wanting at first and could become known only as the several works progressed. In addition to this were

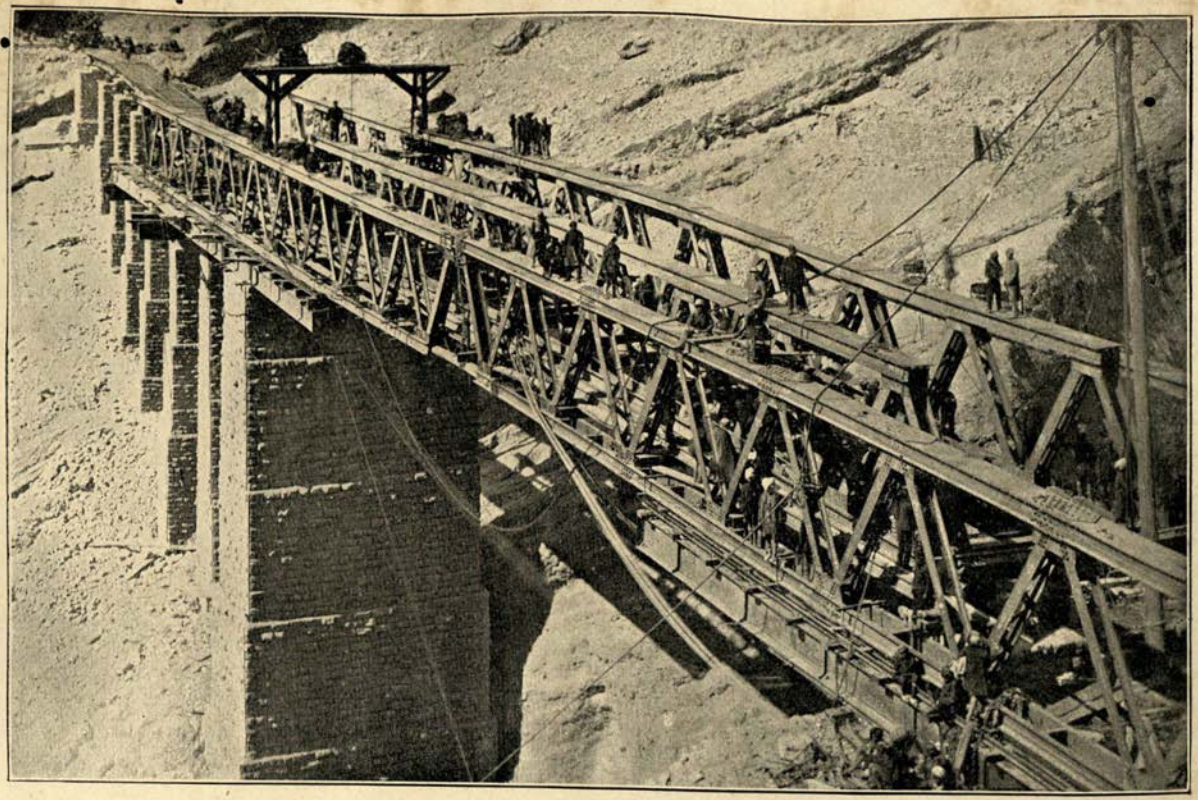
the repetitions of work that were made necessary by the floods and similar causes. In such circumstances it does not require an expert to realise that no estimates could be prepared on which reliance could be placed. All that was possible was to send in "completion reports" showing the actual cost of completed portions of work.

Browne's case, it may be said, reminds one, as to the inquisitor's pressure put upon him, of Keats's lines—

> Half ignorant, he turns an easy wheel,
> That sets sharp racks at work to pinch and feel.

The worry was continuous. Browne had submitted in December, 1884, an approximate estimate for 261½ lakhs, and urged that, with work going on at high pressure, no more detailed estimates could be drawn much before the actual completion of the line. The reply of the Government was, "*The prosecution of the railway is of the first importance. Consequently the works must not be interfered with by the preparation of estimates.*" In spite of this, the pressure from his immediate superior was maintained, while all the time frequent commendations were bestowed by the Secretary of State and the Government of India on General Browne and his staff for the rapid progress made.

It was admitted that if war had broken out in 1887, the line would have more than compensated for any excess of cost. Short staff for the special non-engineering duties caused most of the difficulties complained of—no local auditor, inadequate accounts office, staff for stores inadequate. The conclusion of the report was, "Great credit is due to the Engineer-in-chief and his staff for the rapidity with which they have pushed on the work, notwith-



LOUISE MARGARET BRIDGE IN PROGRESS.

[*To face p.* 260.

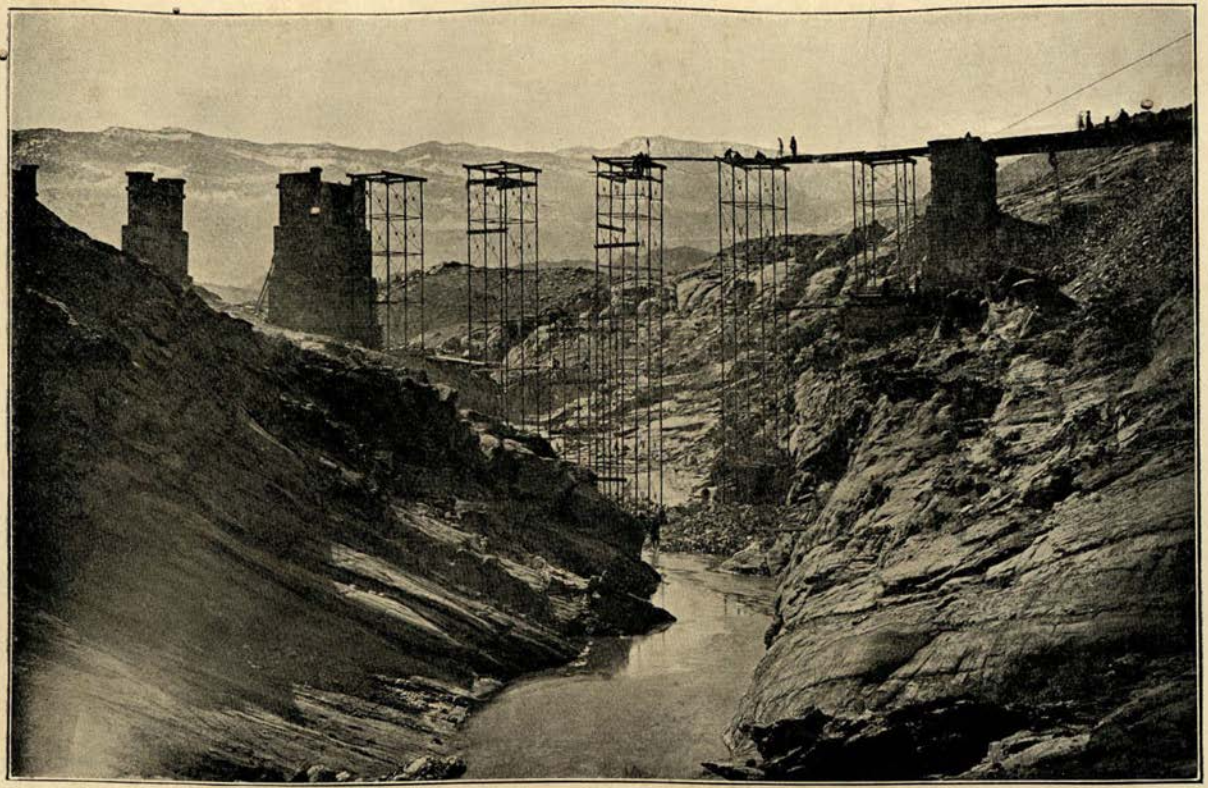
standing the difficulties of every description." Such was the judgment of the highest officials of the Government of India, who thanked them for their able and comprehensive report.

Some further pertinent facts bearing on the undue departure by the officials from the *bona fide* understanding on which Browne's work was being conducted may be now given. These are the outcome not of any statements from Browne, but of the investigations of the most cognisant and capable Engineer officials under the Government. The circumstances, if they did not altogether account for such irregularities as had occurred, at any rate very largely excused them. The extreme urgency of the case was evidenced by the action of Government, and by its orders clearly anticipating the immediate commencement of work. It was not surprising that after reading the letters General Browne thought more of progress than of estimates. If he set to work forthwith to align the road and start operations, he would have no time for estimating. At first, too, Browne had under him few but inexperienced officers, ignorant of the language, etc. In April, 1884, the Secretary of State had telegraphed instructions for pressing on the work, and the Government had replied so as to show that they regarded it as of pressing necessity that the lower section of the road should be completed in the next six months. In November, 1884, the Secretary of State wired, "When will the line be completed?" to which the answer sent (Browne's) was, "With money freely granted, in two and a half years"—a promise, it may be noted, redeemed by the fact that the engines ran over the line in two years and six months.

As time progressed, the fame of these stupendous works attracted the attention of tourists and others of eminence, who could speak with weight, and the works were much visited in 1886. Browne's old friend and commander, Sir Donald Stewart, had seen and been much interested in them, and had shown himself greatly pleased at the splendid health, physique, and high spirits of the men, as well as their military smartness and discipline. One of the visitors was the correspondent of a leading London journal; and he, after five days of close inspection of the works, commented on the contrast between what he had before heard and what he had now seen of the line, especially of the Chuppur Rift, which "completely exceeded his wildest imaginings of what human skill and energy could do!" Another visitor was Lord Rosebery, who, besides examining and discussing the railway, referred to frontier questions, about which his eyes (as he seemed to admit) were opened in a way which he had not expected; and who also appeared to be specially struck with the interest and enthusiasm of the officers and men in the work—"Their soul seemed to be in it." Just so!

During 1886 the sickness and difficulties that had been troubling the work were not so mischievous as before, and it had now progressed rapidly. Towards the end of the year it was hoped that the line might be opened on February 14th following—Jubilee Day in India—but the opening ceremony did not come off till March 27th, when the Chuppur Bridge was finished, and an engine ran over the whole line from Sibi to Quetta.

A very distinguished company, including the Duke of Connaught and Lord Roberts, were present to witness that ceremony, and it was performed by



LOUISE MARGARET BRIDGE IN PROGRESS.

[*To face p.* 262.

H.R.H. the Duchess of Connaught, who named the bridge, and after presiding over a very pleasant meeting desired Browne to address the natives for her, and express her gratification with the great work—the grandest in India.

The story which has now been told of the construction of the Hurnai Railway has included such matters as the overwhelming floods, the devastating epidemics and pestilence, and other material difficulties —some of them quite exceptional and unexpected— with which Browne had to contend; and it will be recognised how severe a task it was to deal with them and how great a feat to overcome them so successfully as he did. But, in addition to these, he was further oppressed by the official troubles, as explained. We have now to deal only with the concluding episodes, which lay in the clearing up of the misunderstandings that still existed in the mind of the Viceroy, and with the authorities in England; all due primarily to the error that still prevailed— respecting the exceptional arrangement on which the enterprise had been started—having never been properly corrected.

The Viceroy, Lord Dufferin, had never seen the work, but had been much troubled with the apparent muddle in its official management, and it was primarily essential to disabuse him of any erroneous impressions he may have formed. The work had been started before he entered on the viceroyalty, and it was therefore possible that he was quite unaware of the special features of the case—particularly those of its earlier days; he was, moreover, deprived latterly of the sound guidance of Sir Donald Stewart, who alone had a correct and thorough knowledge of the circumstances and understandings on which the work

had been started, but had left India, and joined the Council in London, when Browne's difficulties were becoming serious.

Browne's furlough had been sanctioned, but before taking advantage of it he turned off immediately after the opening ceremony to interview Lord Dufferin, whom he found in a very dissatisfied state of mind. Learning that he had been very seriously misled as to the facts, Browne at first caused much irritation by affirming this to be the case; but remaining cool and firm, he was at length enabled to state specifically the initial and crucial circumstances of which the Viceroy had evidently had no knowledge whatever. Browne had carefully kept all demi-official letters, and now produced those he had received telling him to adopt the very line of action for which he had been latterly taken to task. This was a startling revelation, and at once swept away the mistaken ideas that Lord Dufferin had formed. With his eyes thus opened, having arrived at a true understanding of the case, he corrected the tenour of his former communication to England, and supported very warmly the representations Browne made to the home authorities on reaching London.

Browne's arrival in England was at a happy epoch —the first jubilee of the Queen. He was heartily received at the India Office, and his services and those of his staff were warmly acknowledged. He was now a *persona grata* in high quarters, and received the K.C.S.I.

The *Gazettes* testified to the great self-sacrifice displayed, the grave and disheartening difficulties successfully overcome under circumstances which have seldom had a parallel, and tendered the thanks of the Government to Browne and his staff.

During all 1888 he enjoyed his well-earned holiday —and had a thorough rest, though not an idle one. He was ever engaged on some subject of public interest; and then, in 1889, he was selected by Lord Roberts for the post of Quartermaster-General of the army in India—the first officer of his corps who had ever been admitted into that very close borough, the army staff at headquarters in its highest posts.

Lord Dufferin afterwards went over the line himself towards the end of the year, having till then been prevented from doing so by other engagements.

While engaged on his work, Browne, it may be remarked, in continuation of what has been already said about his double, was being constantly greeted as the Mukkur *hajee*, the old assumption being continued by his Ghilzye admirers that it was not for them to comment on his having become a Sahib. In fact, their original ideas had become more and more strengthened and confirmed by the apparently permanent disappearance of the real Mullah himself from Mukkur and that neighbourhood.

CHAPTER XVII

THE POLITICAL SITUATION: 1884–9

THE PENJDEH INCIDENT—BROWNE'S APPOINTMENT AS Q.M.G. IN INDIA—HIS VIEWS ON THE POSITION OF AFFAIRS.

THE urgency of the work described in the two preceding chapters has been strongly and repeatedly expressed, but it may be useful to state more explicitly the causes of the anxiety. They were twofold: first, the actually threatening movements and the false and treacherous statements of the Russians in the neighbourhood of Merv; and second, the weak attitude of Lord Granville and the British Government.

The more recent measures and the position of the Russians in Turkestan must be first described. Hitherto they had already been present in some force on the Tejend oasis. But now their engineer, Lessar, had been reconnoitring ahead, to examine into the alleged difficulty or obstacle in the farther progress of the Russians, said to lie in an extensive rocky range, an alleged "Parapomisus." He had found that this was a myth and that there was no physical obstacle of any gravity existing to the onward move of the Russian force. So now the Russians took possession of Merv and followed up the step by reconnaissances farther ahead.

All this was in clear violation of the existing agreement and understanding between Russia and

England, which in three successive stages had definitely drawn the limit of the Russian advance at a line from Khoja Saleh to Sarakhs, and had affirmed the deserts beyond it to be Turkoman territory, and outside their own zone. But now comes in the Russian practice of a Government composed of apparently disconnected and independent, but at the same time thoroughly autocratic, sections of administration or authority. The diplomats said one thing and used their own maps, the commanders in the front had theirs—quite different—while the Russian staff at headquarters had still another set, which, in spite of M. de Giers' statements to Lord Granville, laid down the boundary of the zone far south of Sarakhs, on the banks of the Murghab, where they were able to begin tampering with the Salik Turkomans of Penjdeh. All this aggressive action led, as usual, to Lord Granville giving up point after point, and then in April, 1884, when Browne was at the end of his first half-year's experience of the work of the Hurnai, arranging for a formal meeting at the disputed site, to settle the matter, in the following October.

General Lumsden, with a suitable escort and staff, was to be in charge of the English party for the work of delimitation, and the point or area from which most anxiety was felt was said to be between the rivers Hurirud and Murghab. But the Russians pressed for the first steps being at Khoja Saleh; and though Lumsden and his party and the Afghan representatives were all ready by the appointed time, the Russian local authorities, General Zelenoi, Dondoukoff, and Korsakoff, put off the matter time after time, on the score of illness and other pretexts, so as to postpone it till after the winter of 1884–5. The

object of this was revealed in due course. It was in order to give time for the arrival in the immediate neighbourhood of large reinforcements, so as to bring superior military strength to bear on the question of the position of the boundary that was to be laid down; and the first sign of this definite intention was shown in the seizure of the position of Pul-i-Khatun, and the advance to Penjdeh, which was Afghan territory. A glance at the map will show how this position stands in relation to Sarakhs, the avowed limit of the Russian advance.

Then during all January, 1885, the Russian, the Afghan, and the British detachments continued to occupy the positions they were holding at the end of 1884 preparatory to the start of the demarcation of the Russo-Afghan boundary, for which they had been gathered. But in February a party of Cossacks of the Russian force, eluding the Afghan detachments, crossed the prescribed boundary, advanced three miles beyond it, and held the point thus attained. Then additional Cossack detachments occupied some other neighbouring posts in advance, and were followed on March 16th by a body of Russians. In spite of these glaring insults and breaches of agreement, Mr. Gladstone accepted the position; the natural result being further treacherous movements of the Russians, leading, on March 30th, to the conflict at Penjdeh between the Russians and the Afghans, the Russians being under the command of General Komaroff.

This outrage exceeded the limits of even Mr. Gladstone's complaisance; the question was acknowledged to be one not of debatable frontiers, but of national honour, and the declaration of war seemed imminent. The Czar declined to allow any investigation into Komaroff's conduct, but proposed the

arbitration of a friendly sovereign. This was accepted, and the result was an adjournment, to which the Ameer heartily agreed. But even after this the Russians on the spot continued aggressive, and it is quite uncertain how the matter might have ended; but fortunately the Gladstone Ministry resigned and Lord Salisbury accepted office. His firm tone and his resolute character entirely changed the attitude of the Czar and his satellites, and his dictum sufficed. Russia dropped the game of brag, Lord Salisbury's ruling and alignment were accepted, and all differences ended in the demarcation being forthwith begun and carried out, partly in that year, 1885, and partly afterwards. Hitches, of course, occurred at various points from time to time, but the Russian attitude was changed, and all was eventually settled amicably, successive difficulties as they arose being smoothed away by the good temper and shrewdness of the Ameer and by his personal presence on the spot.

Meanwhile the Penjdeh incident of March 30th, 1885, by which time Browne had been hard at work on the Hurnai for eighteen months, had roused Lord Dufferin, Sir Donald Stewart, and the Indian Government into prompt and vigorous action. Preparations were made for the movement of large forces to the assistance of Afghanistan, both by the Khyber and by Candahar. Lord Roberts was summoned for this purpose from his command at Madras; the Cutchee Plain and the roads to Quetta and onward were filled with troops and transport; and both the road and the railroad through the Bolan were pressed vigorously, and a permanent addition of 20,000 men to the British army in India was also arranged for.

The attitude of the country was now very different from what it had been in Lord Lytton's time. The

present movement was in support of a native power and not an attack on it; and the real sense of the situation, as felt by the Government, was evinced by their free admission of Russian officers, then travelling in India, to the army manœuvres at Delhi early in 1886.

Before this, while Browne had been carrying on his work on the Hurnai, and the events that have been described had been taking place, Lord Ripon had left India, and his successor, Lord Dufferin, supported by Sir Donald Stewart, had been working in full concert with the Ameer at the preparations for such immediate and prompt action as might be necessary for opposition to Russian aggression. They had been joined by Lord Roberts from the Madras command; and, while a sharp outlook was being kept up at Peshawur, and the Hurnai line was being carried on with desperate energy, troops were being gathered and all the necessary preparations were being made about Quetta for an advance thence to Candahar. The Quetta railway Engineers were vigorously at work, and an ordinary road, with the bridges needed for the numerous crossings and vagaries of the Bolan River, was being rapidly pushed by the energetic Engineer of Quetta, Colonel Tomkins. And while all this was going on we were again at loggerheads with that very unsatisfactory monarch, the King of Burma. Browne's old commander in Egypt, Sir Herbert Macpherson, had at first the charge of the operations against him, but died before they were completed. They were, however, speedily carried out with thorough success by his successor, Sir Harry Prendergast, R.E.

By the time that Browne had finished the Hurnai most of the troubles noted were at an end: but

the movements of Russia, however much they had been affected by Lord Salisbury's vigour, had not only created a state of matters that required a thorough settlement, but had laid bare, in an unmistakable manner, the weaknesses of the British India position, and led to the unavoidable conclusion, even to a Gladstonian Cabinet, of the need of a thoroughly sound and effective system of material defences and military preparations, as well as measures of policy, on the north-west frontiers of India.

The last chapter mentioned Browne's appointment to the post of Quartermaster-General when the end of his furlough was approaching, and also how greatly he was occupied during the whole time he was in England with important subjects connected with India. Among those with whom he was brought into close contact, at one time or another, were Lord Roberts, the Commander-in-chief in India, and Sir George Chesney, his colleague as military member of the Council. And both of them were anxious that he should become Quartermaster-General of the army when General Chapman, who at that time held the post, vacated it in ordinary course.

Such an appointment would, it may be observed, be an entire innovation, upsetting all traditional usages under which the post had lain in what may be styled the closest of close boroughs, and had been obtained only by rising, as Lord Roberts had himself done, through the several successive grades of the department till the highest post in it was reached. But Browne's career had marked him out as an exceptional character, more especially during the last few years.

These particular antecedents may be noted. Towards the end of 1887 many inquiries and schemes that had

been incubating for some years came to a close or to a decisive stage. One of these was the work of the Defence Committee of India, and another the special question of the defence of the Quetta frontier towards Candahar. Browne had been closely connected with both these inquiries; and latterly, while still on the Hurnai, he had been specially consulted in regard to the problem of the Quetta frontier. The ground involved was the field in which he had been engaged in Biddulph's and Sir Donald Stewart's advance to Candahar, including as it did the two passes—the Khojak and the Gwaja—through what was known as the Khwaja Amran range. Sir G. Chesney and Browne had visited the spot together and seen the progress of the tunnel that had been started on the Khojak; and now, when they were both in London, they had tackled the subject again, but from other points of view. Lord Roberts had already consulted Browne, as above noted, while he was still at the Hurnai, and had elicited from him the following opinions.

His theory was clear. He fully recognised the absolute necessity of fortifying some position which an invading enemy could not avoid, and which could be made an obstacle of such strength and such expansion that it could neither be captured nor turned. He agreed with the positions proposed; but in regard to the general scheme he objected to the use of huge forts or extensive fortifications, preferring a system of extemporised works, taking advantage of natural obstacles, defensive lines, and the interlacing of roads and railroads for facility of communication. So that an enemy should find on its path extemporised Plevnas, when least expected.

"Study the country," he added, "have your positions

selected, and the moment it is necessary, run up extemporised entrenchments." With rocky ground, such as abounded there, he would prepare galleries in the rocks ready to be turned into embrasures of batteries, invisible until wanted and brought into use. Nor, he thought, need this be costly; for his experience of tunnel work gave him a much truer knowledge of the expense of such preparations than could be possessed by mere theorists. Forts, he held, placed at other than absolutely obligatory points, had merely to be avoided or circumvented. They simply told an enemy "what not to do and where not to go."

Advantage also was taken at the same time of his intimate local knowledge to discuss and settle many points respecting routes and passes, such as the Khojak, the Machai, and others.

Besides the measures for the Khojak, Browne had also very strong views on the necessity of making Nushki an obligatory point on the railway to Candahar, if only to enable a concentration of troops and munitions to be made there in the event of any flank movements from the elbow of the Helmund, as its great bend is called.

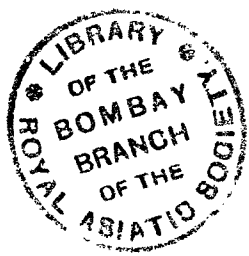
The Nushki position and the ridge of the Khwaja Amran range would be readily fortified, with posts to command the passes, with good military roads connecting the several points and the railways, in rear, and concentrating all the resources of India in support. An enemy, on the other hand, would have to traverse a barren plain, about eighty miles in width, wholly destitute of forage or the means of supporting a large number of troops—and in which any large movements of troops could be discerned from the range at the distance of about twelve miles; the range would be impregnable.

The importance of Nushki he held to be the paramount feature of the scheme; as without some such complete measures as those advocated there would be grave possibilities of an enemy's approach, when very serious consequences might ensue. But with such arrangements carried out, as above proposed, the facilities for further measures, and the fidelity of Beloochistan, would be ensured. The local proverb is that "the Helmund district is the waist of Beloochistan," and nothing could be imagined to clasp it more strongly than a railway girdle from Nushki, with an entrenched camp in advance.

In support of these views Browne said in another document that, while recognising the importance of the Khojak Tunnel, he held the Nushki line to be of equal, in fact of paramount necessity. He pointed out further, in support of this, that the speed of the construction of the Nushki line could be counted on with much greater confidence than that of the Khojak Tunnel, and he adduced other reasons in support, which need not be mentioned here. Hearty unison with the Beloochees and the securing of their entire confidence was one of the strongest bases of his views. It could act and be sufficient of itself, but would also tend to facilitate similar good-will from the Afghans.

The importance and correctness of these views became evident in later days, when, as a fact, the details of the frontier position beyond the farther end of the Khojak Tunnel caused much unpleasantness with the Ameer—an unfortunate matter, as raising doubts on the propriety of our action. For the Ameer had not been a touchy or over-sensitive ally when the aspect of our relations with Russia had been very threatening.

In all these discussions and arguments Browne enunciated his own views, whether they did or did not agree with the report of the Defence Committee; and it may be reasonably assumed that his views had much to do with his selection for the post he was now to hold.


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CHAPTER XVIII

QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL: 1889-92

GENERAL WORK AS Q.M.G.—SPECIAL SUBJECTS DEALT WITH—FRONTIER EXPEDITIONS—BLACK MOUNTAIN EXPEDITION—THE RUSSIAN AND PERSIAN QUESTION—ZHOB VALLEY EXPEDITION—FRONTIER POLICY.

IN the preceding chapter the circumstances leading to Browne's appointment have been described, and it may again be observed that it was an innovation in more ways than one. It was the first time that Browne had ever been employed on military duties or in a military department except in actual warfare; and still more, it was the first time that any R.E., any officer of his corps, had ever been employed in the Quartermaster-General's Department. But though the department and the army were doubtless surprised, there was no sign of any cavilling or questioning in regard to the appointment, for Browne's merits and capacity were universally known and acknowledged. At the same time, it was at once surmised that his conduct of the duties of the post would be much more rough-and-ready than was customary, and would somewhat strain the orthodox conformity with rules and regulations heretofore so rigidly adhered to.

But, somewhat autocratic as he might be as to the interpretation of rules, he conformed to them



Photo Lithographed by Hoffmann, India. Art Reproduct

Sir James Browne, R.E. K.C.B. K.C.S.I.

Quarter Master General.

thoroughly in spirit, especially when there was no doubt about them, and when it was a personal question and not one of work. Such a case—and a very unique one—was now involved. Ever since he appeared on the scene in India, Browne had been almost identified by his beard; but Lord Roberts required in his special staff the strictest conformity with regulations, and beards were not in order, even when worn by one of the most distinguished occupants of the post. So Browne's beard was doffed, with this result, that the new Quartermaster-General could with difficulty be identified with the universally known "Buster."

Another point—a very special one—may also be here noted. On his proceeding to take up this appointment, he was leaving England for the last time, never to return. He stepped at once from the post he was then joining to his final appointment at Beloochistan, the vacancy of which occurred suddenly from the unexpected death of his predecessor therein, Sir R. Sandeman.

But, to revert to the appointment itself, his thorough knowledge of railways and of our north-west frontier was certain to be of great value in dealing with Indian defence and mobilisation. His thoughts too had long been filled with projects reaching far into the future, such as strategic railway extensions, mobilisation, concerted arrangements with the colonies, and the like. The more departmental subjects dealt with by the Quartermaster-General had little attraction for him—they consisted in details which he had not dealt in. But it was as well that there should be a change to a broader view of things from the comparatively cramped range of subjects with which the department dealt in its routine work. It was, of course,

a matter of moment to Browne that both the principal military officers in India, the Commander-in-chief and the Military Member of the Council, were of one mind in selecting him for the post.

Irrespective of routine work, Browne's special functions would lie in the movements of troops, especially during war and the threatenings of war, a situation which was likely to be, and was, in fact, ceaseless; as during Lord Roberts's command-in-chief war was always going on somewhere. This will be seen from the list of expeditions that were carried on during Browne's three years' tenure of this post as shown on page 282.

In regard to the special question of the Border defences in front of Quetta, it may be observed that before Browne joined the Hurnai work in 1883, he had been employed on the Defence Committee at Simla, and had there acquired an exceptional degree of knowledge on frontier defences generally. So now, in 1889, six years afterwards, he was thoroughly qualified to deal with the conclusions at which that committee and the chief authorities had arrived, and the decisions on the points involved, on which orders were now definitely passed. It had taken some time to thrash out the final conclusions, as every expert had eventually had his say, and the inquiry had been very thorough. Practically the final conclusions on this report formed the Bible for his departmental guidance, and now that the principles and salient points were settled, it fell on him to organise and work at giving effect to the conclusions formed. Hence, instead of remaining chiefly at the army headquarters as his predecessors had generally done, he was ceaselessly on the move, visiting the stations all over the Bengal Presidency and pressing

forward and helping the executive measures to give effect to the conclusions arrived at and the orders issued, as well as to the new schemes for the mobilisation of troops.

While these arrangements and schemes were under preparation, Browne was not settled quietly at any headquarters, but was generally on the move in one part of India or another—Peshawur, Quetta, Rawalpindee, Calcutta, Burma, Assam, and elsewhere, as well as the intermediate stations—for his multifarious tasks entailed personal inspections and investigations, with of course the subsequent reports and proposals; and the subjects involved were such practical matters as the hutting of troops, the organisation of transport, the sanitation of stations, reconnaissances and surveys for lines of communication, and the like.

In addition to such technical work, he drew up very full and suggestive papers on subjects of moment to the State, based on his personal visits and inquiries. These subjects embraced frontier defences including Quetta; frontier railways; the concert of varied communications, *e.g.* by railway, road, and river; sites for passages of the Indus and other rivers; the Khojak Tunnel; temporary military railways, such as for the Chitral expedition; routes, railways, and preparations generally for the defence of India on the north-west, and so on. His State papers indeed form a most valuable collection; for, in fact, during his tenure of the post of Quartermaster-General Browne was dealing with questions of exceptionally high importance, and directly subject to the scrutiny and criticism of such men as Lord Roberts and Sir George Chesney. His views and suggestions, it need hardly be said, were most of them confidential and are not available for publication, but a few that are

available are dealt with when the subjects involved are discussed.

The most important subjects on which he reported are the following:

The military strength of Russia in Central Asia.

An Indo-Afghan Railway to Herat.

The extension of railways beyond the Indus.

The improved feeling on the frontier.

But in addition to these were others, which could not be dealt with except very briefly or by name only. Such as:

On the meeting-point of the English and the Russian advance on the Arabian Sea.

On the Frontier Policy in 1890.

On a railway from Cabul to Candahar.

On other railways in Afghanistan, *e.g.* connecting Ghuznee and Khelat-i-Ghilzie with our own frontier positions.

On the terms for concert with the Ameer regarding them.

On recruiting for our army on the frontier.

On tribal levies and the like.

On railways in Zhob.

On the formation of a new Trans-Indus Province (since carried out).

On improvements in frontier administration.

On the widespread misconceptions of the condition and needs of the frontier.

On the proper basis for such administration and influence lying in interminable conversations and personal intercourse, with a minimum of paper-work and correspondence.

Many of the expeditions were serious little wars, causing much anxiety and attracting much attention at the time, and bringing to their commanders, as was

due to them, high honour and repute. But on Browne and the army staff they merely entailed very hard work in the preparations and arrangements for the expeditions. At one time 30,000 men were on active service—not *en masse*, but in separate parties, each demanding special arrangements and preparations.

The Chitral expedition, it may be remarked, was an exceptionally severe strain because it came on quite suddenly, when Wuzeerabad was still occupied by mobilisation troops and the stores at Peshawur had just been destroyed by fire, requiring the base to be shifted from Peshawur to Nowshera. In addition he had to supervise large camps of exercise at Muridki, Khairabad, and Aligurh.

But his great and prominent task was the organisation of an entirely new scheme for the mobilisation of troops for campaign work. Under this scheme the basis was changed from mobilisation by regiments or corps, into mobilisation by stations. The smoothness of the working and the elasticity and soundness of his scheme were soon tested and proved by the Chitral campaign, the severe strain of which established its efficacy, especially in regard to the tables he drew up, as, for instance, for railway movements, for equipment, station stores, field manuals, general troop movements, obligatory garrisons, etc.—matters which all lay directly under the Quartermaster-General.

Though, doubtless, more was still open for him to advise on, Browne's time as Quartermaster-General closed abruptly at the end of three years, when, in consequence of the sudden death of Sir Robert Sandeman, Governor-General's Agent in Beloochistan, he was selected for the succession to that post. The letters he received, both of regret at the cessation of

his recent functions and of compliment at the high and very important charge now assigned him, were very pleasant and gratifying.

It need hardly be said that while Browne was Quartermaster-General the Russians had been steadily pressing their way into Central Asia—on the passes, and the Afghan borders, but chiefly in Afghan Turkestan, among the Huzari subjects of the Ameer, and wherever, for any reason, it could be claimed that the frontiers were not defined. In Africa the Mahdi and other troubles were in full force; and Rhodes's settlement of Rhodesia was being effected, though to be followed quickly by the Matabele war.

While Browne was dealing chiefly and vigorously with the two great subjects to which Lord Roberts had desired his special attention—the west frontier defence and mobilisation—he had of course to take his proper part in regard to another important class of military questions, the frontier wars and expeditions; although other commanders and officers were in specific charge of their direct conduct and management. They can be conveniently dealt with in two groups: those on the eastern frontiers, and those on the west or north-west.

On the east there had been during those three years some seven more or less prolonged contests—viz. with Burma, Sikkim, the Looshaies (2), the Chins, Manipur, and the Kachins.

On the north-west there had been six, though they might be held to be more numerous, as these areas were extensive, and the troops detached. There were two against the Mirunzyes and Orakzyes, and one against each of the following: Zhob, Hazara and the Black Mountain, Hunza, Nuggur, Gilgit and Isazye.

In all these contests the difficulties lay in the mountainous character of the country and all the important points being held by the enemy.

The only contest that need be referred to at greater length is that of the Black Mountain expedition. The reason for this is, the personal part which Lord Roberts played in it, and the limitations of the sphere of operations, under the specific orders of the Government, to a very restricted area—a restriction which led to a much more widespread and serious and costly war four years later. The whole business was typical—typical, that is, of the blunders and evil policy of Government, interfering with the military operations, and, in a short-sighted and half-hearted manner, stopping them when the enemy were not yet vanquished or cowed, thus encouraging them to repeat the struggle at their own convenience. The enemy were contemptible, but they had their old stereotyped methods of fighting, while the restrictions imposed on Lord Roberts and his force played into their hands. The orders were so strict and peremptory that evasion of them or of their results was impossible. As in all such mountain conflicts, there was one body of determined fighters—Ghazees—and these duly sought and met their fate: otherwise the enemy were merely hiding, sniping, and skulking for opportunities.

Then the troops were withdrawn to fit in with reports that would reach England at a critical date, although, during the whole term of retirement, there were always sufficiently near well-hidden, numerous tribesmen, keeping up a persistent desultory fire on the troops. One can imagine what the chagrin and irritation of the Chief must have been at this return to the worst periods and worst modes which had

been now and then allowed to mark our conduct of hill warfare.

It is difficult to imagine what valid objection there could have been to the measure that was obviously essential—the selection of a proper frontier line in advance, really and easily defensible, affording all the military and political facilities that were needed, and bringing the inhabitants under British rule. The Indus would have formed a natural boundary along a great part of such frontier line; but, although there were mounted troops with the force, it does not appear that much further information of the lie of the country was obtained. It has been suggested that the Allai Valley would have made a good boundary—in a word, the whole of the Black Mountain should have been brought into British territory.

One of the subjects in which Browne was particularly interested, and about which he corresponded with his brother officers and others, was the advance of Russia and of India towards the mouth of the Persian Gulf and where they would be likely to meet.

He gathered that the Russians would be likely to move from Khorasan on the death of the Shah, and only wait the development of their newer trades and enterprises in Trans-Caspia to advance and take Herat. So we should push on to Nushki; we otherwise should meet them near Candahar or on the Helmund. There was no reason to think of a Sebastopol on the Persian Gulf: either Englishmen must be off the seas altogether or they would never let Russia settle on the "Gulf," or get there as a naval power; and if she tried to do so it would be a very vulnerable point at which to worry and annoy her.

The Trans-Caspian Railway was likely to reach Tashkent, and vastly strengthen Russia on the Penjdeh

frontier. Railway branches could then be pushed on to various points, from which to advance farther to Herat and Meshed, with branches from Bairam Ali and Charjui to Karki and Penjdeh. Browne knew that General Armenhoff and all the Russian officials in Trans-Caspia were very eager for the scheme.

He understood that Sir H. D. Wolff could get no concession for railways, but that he might get a finger in the railway pie if he consented to go shares with Russia in a railway from Rescht to Mohamrah, which, however, would be a doubtful policy. He had heard rumours of concessions in railways being granted to two Russian capitalists; lines from Rescht to Teheran and on to Koru and Ispahan, and from Koru to Kermanshah, were what he heard the Russians wanted, and also a line from Sarakhs to Meshed. It was possible that the Shah might refuse railway concessions to both English and Russians, and give them to Belgians or French, but in that case they would either be good for Russia, or no good to any one.

On the other hand Browne advocated a railway from Gwadur within Beloochee limits to Seistan, and another from Nushki which would threaten the Caspian line. 'There was this objection to any such scheme, that they would be far from India, and Herat would be a doubtful ally. Khorasan would probably have practically become Russian, with a nasty bit of country between Seistan and Trans-Caspia. The Caucasus, Bokhara, and the Turkomans were already subdued, and would every year become less inclined to revolt. The Tzar would be likely to consolidate and tranquillise all his part of Central Asia. Seistan ought certainly to be ours and the Nushki Railway should be pushed on, but there could be no likelihood,

he held, of our establishing ourselves in Persia or on Persian territory, nor of any railway from Bandar Abbas except in the event of a game of "catch who catch can" being started by Russia on the death of the Shah. He had learnt that inland from Gwadur the country was rugged, mountainous, and full of gorges, very difficult for railways. On some other points he knew that Gwadur had a fair anchorage in an open bay, but was not to be compared in this respect with Bandar Abbas, which with the island of Kishm has an excellent harbour fit for a large fleet and in every way suitable for military purposes.

A British occupation of any part of Persia south of the great plateau was held to be practically impossible unless we intended to partition the empire and take all south of the line from Kermanshah, Ispahan, and Kirman. But the people bear us no love and the climate on the lower plains is too hot for Europeans. By that route we could not do more than prevent Russia getting down from Persia and Mesopotamia.

Seistan, he held, could not act as a menace to the Trans-Caspian Railway, as troops from Tashkent and the Caucasus could be massed so readily, but it might help to prevent Russia from getting to the "Gulf" on the eastern road, *i.e.* by the route to the east of the Great Salt Desert, and might help in keeping Afghanistan in order. This, however, would not prevent the Russians coming down through Armenia and Mesopotamia or *viâ* the Karun, were the latter unoccupied. But Seistan and Las Jowain would support British troops, who would there enjoy fair comfort and health.

He further thought that Persia would *nominally* help Russia, but would dally and delay and would never attack us unless in company with or coerced

by Russian troops. And, in any case, she would bring nothing worth having in the way of troops, regular or irregular, unless her military organisation were materially changed meanwhile. Her undisciplined rabble, with no commissariat or transport of any sort, miserably equipped, would only loot and drive away the inhabitants both friendly and unfriendly, eat up supplies, and never do a day's fighting.

The Luristan tribes would help us. They hate the Persians, but they do not love us or know us at present. It would probably be a question of money and nothing else, and as we have the longest purse they would come to us. We might prevent Russia from coming down the Karun, but to do any good we must occupy Ispahan, etc., and not stay in a barren, mountainous, uncivilised country like Luristan.

One other expedition may be mentioned—that from Quetta through the Zhob Valley debouching through the Mahsood Wuzeeree country, the site of Browne's first experience of war. This expedition, though it had to coerce and fine some troublesome chiefs and tribes, and settle the country, met with no actual fighting; but its object was the important one of getting a thorough grip of that country with a view to the preparation for the double routes which were to be carried out thence, from the Derajat, north-west and south-west towards Ghuznee and Khelat-i-Ghilzie respectively through the passes of the Gomul and Zhob Rivers. The object was to clear and establish a strong strategical starting-ground. It was practically the same ground, then quite unknown, that Biddulph and Browne had traversed between the first and second periods of the Afghan war; but now much valuable information, through the investigation of these several parties and of Colonel Buchanan

Scott and others, had been collected and was to lead to the organisation of the through routes desired. In fact, Browne's view was that the carrying out of the route to Khelat-i-Ghilzie would practically lead to a partition of Afghanistan being available without any further difficulty, whenever it might be desired, by an east and west line running between Ghuznee and Khelat-i-Ghilzie, while that through the Zhob country itself would connect Quetta directly with the Upper Punjab.

With regard to the expedition on the western frontiers, though the management and control of the tribes was not Browne's present business, still his knowledge of them was so great that his views as to the methods to be pursued could not fail to have effect. It was essential to discriminate between those districts where Pathans were concerned and those connected with Beloochees; between those tribes in which there was a large body of skilled and industrious cultivators, or of clever and keen traders, and those who lived by plunder and evil deeds. Thus when Browne had been in England in 1888, there had been an effort made to open the Gomul Pass, but it had been a failure owing to the misunderstanding of the leading bad characters, especially one Umar Khan. The Mahsood Wuzeerees were a clan that especially required a careful and organised controlling policy, not only from their intrinsic qualities, but from the fact that they completely dominated both the Gomul and the Traki Passes to Khelat-i-Ghilzie and to Ghuznee respectively. It was necessary therefore not only to get a grip of the routes and passes, but to secure and develop the country, and it was with this view that, at the end of 1889, about the time of Browne's return to India as Quartermaster-

General, Lord Lansdowne had a meeting at Dera Ishmael Khan of the leading officers concerned—Lord Roberts, the Governor of the Punjab, and Colonel Sandeman—and then with them rode up the Gomul and passed a scheme for occupying Zhob and opening up the Gomul.

Before closing this part of Browne's career it may be mentioned that it was not till he had moved into his next post that the thoroughness and value of his mobilisation work were, or indeed could be, recognised. Also, though *ex officio* necessarily connected with the question from the first, he was for some time only one of the members of the committee. But now Lord Roberts, at the instance, it is thought, of Sir H. Brackenbury, placed the superintendence of the whole matter in Browne's hands. Browne had always taken an interest in it, and now he took the subject *con amore*, and showed himself a thorough expert in its requirements if only from his exceptional knowledge of the frontier and of railways and his aptitude for all arrangements connected with the concentration and movements of troops. It was a foregone conclusion that at any rate his measures would be thoroughly practical. They were early pronounced to be satisfactory, and in 1895 they stood the severe test of the rapid mobilisation of 16,000 troops for the relief of Chitral. This mobilisation and his frontier schemes leave an indelible stamp on the value of his work as Quartermaster-General of the army, as thus authoritatively described:

"A very startling collapse and break-up has befallen the hostile attitude so long maintained towards us along the border. The frontier tribes seem to have been impressed, almost at one and the same moment, by a sudden consciousness that the game was up;

that they were now surrounded on all sides by the British power; and that the best thing to be done was to submit, and to make the best terms for themselves. This consciousness was clearly described by a Wuzeeree *mallick*, in reply to my question as to how it was that they had all so suddenly given up their old standing hostility towards us. He simply put his thumb between his teeth, and said, 'What shall we do between the upper and lower jaws,'—the jaws being the Beloochistan Agency on one side, and the Punjab on the other. But notwithstanding this forcible illustration, I do not think this change of temper is entirely due to a feeling that we are too strong for them. The spirit of fanaticism is very rapidly disappearing. When passing the graves of some sixty Ghazees who were killed by our troops in the Zhob expedition of 1885, I remarked to Shingul, the hereditary chief of Zhob, that they were brave men, to whom we bore no grudge, and lifted my hat to a conspicuous grave erected over the leader.

"On my arriving the same day at Khusnob, the village to which the leader and most of the killed had belonged, his father and mother, with many villagers, brought me a big pot of milk as a token of good-will, and of their appreciation of what they had heard from Shingul. Civilisation is asserting itself, and leavening the whole of the country between the Punjab and Afghanistan proper.

"A vigorous effort will soon make the tribes on the Punjab frontier appreciate our rule as heartily and loyally as the Beloochee confederacy now does; and so secure them as allies.

"Just as, in the political problem, the Ameer's alliance is the first factor, so, in the military question, will the advantage be with the Power which first gets a firm grip of the Cabul-Candahar line. Again, as the allegiance of Beloochistan and of the fringe of frontier tribes is our political reserve against the Ameer's siding with Russia, so the power of rapidly throwing our troops direct by a Zhob railway from the Khyber to the Khojak is our military insurance against losing the Cabul-Candahar line. Just as the military need of a direct railway link between the Khyber and the Khojak has very lately asserted itself, so the political need for measures creating a new

Trans-Indus province has now come upon us, and is none the less real for being rather unexpected.

"As scarcity of fighting men is our main difficulty, we must endeavour to make soldiers for ourselves out of the magnificent material which the extension of our influence during the last six months has placed at our disposal. Whilst the Punjab would still supply the backbone of our regular native army, we should also prepare tribal levies officered by English and native gentlemen trained in a Trans-Indus school, which there is considerable danger of our losing under the existing system: which leaves, in the native army, and even in the Punjab frontier force, little scope to an officer to develop the power of rapidly organising, and properly commanding, undisciplined and turbulent, though naturally warlike, savages.

"It is a mistake to suppose that because a country is thinly peopled, barren, and unhealthy, it can get on comfortably with a small and inefficient, whilst cheap and therefore probably corrupt, administration for revenue, police, and judicial business.

"With a staff sufficient in quantity as in quality the revenues of the Trans-Indus province would increase faster than the cost of administration; and its agricultural, commercial, and mineral capabilities would, under liberal treatment, be considerably greater than is generally supposed.

"We have admittedly to complete some 666 miles of railway within Afghanistan proper; from Dacca, *viâ* Cabul, Ghuznee, Candahar, to Chaman, and from Girdao, *viâ* the Gomul, to Ghuznee, forming the main lines indispensable to our hold of the country. And that too before Russia absorbs Afghan Turkestan.

"It is a stock phrase that we cannot offer Afghanistan any bribe equal to that held out by Russia in the shape of the plunder of India; but with such a proposition, I disagree. Any auditor can pass, unquestioned, an outlay of five per cent. in excess of estimate. An offer to the Ameer to subsidise him to that extent, which on the scale of European railway concessions is ridiculously low, in addition to the enormous profits made by his people on the capital spent on construction, is a bribe.

"Many highly trained and educated soldiers and

civilians, both in England and India, but unacquainted with frontier conditions and the technical details of railway construction, have in my experience been quite incapable of appreciating the complicated reasons which are moulding our present policy.

"We have sufficient data to know where the railway between Pesheen and Dera Ishmael Khan must run; on which, as being the administrative as well as military backbone of any Trans-Indus province, no delay should now occur. There should be a staff sufficient to carry out routine district work, independently of, and quite distinct from, the maintenance of influence over the tribes. This influence, I may remark, is mainly based on interminable conversations and personal intercourse which cannot coexist with the submission of periodic returns or paper-work of any sort, and is only obtained by men gifted with very special qualifications."

CHAPTER XIX

BELOOCHISTAN: 1888–94

BROWNE'S APPOINTMENT TO THE AGENCY OF KHELAT AND BELOOCHISTAN—CLOSE OF SANDEMAN'S RULE—AFFAIRS OF KHELAT—DEPOSITION OF THE REIGNING KHAN—BRITISH BELOOCHISTAN—THE HIGH COURTS—PUBLIC WORKS AND IMPROVEMENTS IN THE PROVINCE.

THE various successive episodes in Sandeman's rule of Beloochistan have been described from time to time[1] as Browne came in contact with the province; but it still remains to deal with those of the last few years during which Browne was not directly connected with it, though keenly taken up with the question of its frontier defences. From Lord Lytton's time till these last four years, Sandeman had kept a steady pressure on the Khan, a man of a naturally brutal and untamed disposition, as has been described, and all had gone well in the direction of British Beloochistan. But there had ever been feuds and petty wars with the great tribes stretching away westwards along the coast of the Arabian Sea to the borders of Persia, and the occurrences there, as well as in British territory, must be briefly described. It will be remembered that Sandeman's was a double charge—the actual rule of British Beloochistan on the one hand, and on the other the political

[1] *Vide* Chapter IX, and later.

management of the territory of which the Khan of Khelat was the recognised head, as *primus inter pares.*

There had first of all been some difficulty at Lus Beyla in Khelat territory in consequence of quarrels between the members of the family of the Jam (as its chief is called); but these had been soon settled, after a short interregnum under an outsider, Rae Hitta Ram. Then the organisation of the administration of British Beloochistan had been vigorously taken up. An exceptionally able officer, Mr. Hugh Barnes, had been posted to the organisation of the revenue and police arrangements, and following on this a code of laws and regulations was framed, police and tribal levies were raised, public works and railways were expanded, as well as irrigation, water supply, and forestry; and, lastly, education was taken in hand. With this progress the province had naturally begun to attract much attention. First Lord Dufferin and afterwards Lord Lansdowne visited it; also Lord Roberts frequently, as well as the rulers of Madras, Bombay, and the Punjab, and the Afghan Governor of Candahar. But, both now and later on, in Browne's time one of the most important and the most studious inquirers among all the visitors was the present Viceroy (then Mr. Curzon), who delighted Browne by the thoroughness of his inquisition. This, no doubt, led to the drastic changes which he introduced when his time came, as will be afterwards shown. A great durbar was eventually held in November, 1889, at which both the Khan of Khelat and the Jam of Lus Beyla were present, besides a posse of minor chiefs.

After this came the measures, already referred to, which were taken, when Browne was Quartermaster-General, for the opening out of the Zhob and the general routes from the Wuzeeree country towards Khelat-i-

Ghilzie and Ghuznee respectively. A durbar was also now held which, so to speak, gave the signal for the unanimous laudation from the Press of India of the model which Sandeman had now given of border administration. As it was, he had, in addition, taken the opportunity to impress on those with him his view that Wana was the site from which to have full control over the Wuzeerees and their passes but fear of the susceptibilities of the Ameer seems at that time, to have stood in the way. Other expeditions followed, notably against the Sheranee and Khidderzye tribes, and then he turned his attention to the western, the Mekran, country. There considerable turmoil had arisen. The several clans of Mekran and Panjgur, of Kej and Gickki, and the Naushirwanees, were engaged in internecine strife, with the result of much anarchy, in the course of which Major Muir was attacked and wounded. Sandeman received full powers from the Khan and made a temporary settlement; and then, not before he needed it, took a trip to England, in which he endeavoured, but without success, to obtain sanction for the measures which he desired to bring about When he left India on his short visit to England Sir Oliver St. John at first acted for him; but suddenly fell ill and died, and the confusion in the khanate increased greatly.

Hence on his return, Sandeman found that the settlements he had made had not lasted, and that the muddle was at least as great as ever. The clan feuds had been renewed and were in full progress, while the Khan himself, whom he had been controlling and guiding for some seventeen years, was apparently relapsing into his old savage temper and barbarous ways. In fact, though keeping quiet while under

steady pressure, he was always at heart a genuine savage. There was bitter quarrel and strife in his palace, and Zenana murders were talked of. The greatest anxieties, however, seemed to be again about Lus Beyla, so thither Sandeman went, partly by sea, and met the Mekran and other chiefs. But while there he suddenly contracted an illness by which he was carried off, after only a few days, towards the end of January, 1892, leaving the local turmoil and difficulties in full swing.

Such were the circumstances in which Browne, on landing from Burma, found himself to his intense surprise summoned to Quetta to take charge of the Agency in succession to Sandeman, whom he had known throughout the whole period of his sway in Beloochistan, with whose views he had ever been in entire unison, and for whom he had always held and avowed a hearty liking and admiration. But the times were changing. Sandeman had done splendid work and guided the new state and province through its infancy to healthy manhood, but it was now about to be left to Browne to continue that work and guidance through the struggles of manhood.

Irrespective, however, of his being in agreement with Sandeman's usual policy, it must be here observed that Browne's appointment to Beloochistan was not in agreement with his own aims and wishes at that juncture. His career had heretofore been full of changes, not only in the sites of his work, but in the professional character and in the administrative departments to which his posts had appertained. This had, therefore, affected him as if he were a rolling stone, gathering no moss; and had forced on him the sense that these constant changes tended to militate against his advancement to those still higher posts

to which he was entitled to aspire; the more so if he were debarred from direct contact with the Government, even though no other obstacles or impediments or personal difficulties came in the way.

His inclination, therefore, was to say "no" to the offer—the rather that he had been more and more bent latterly on a military career and on high command with its opportunity for military distinction. He explained accordingly that such were his feelings and views; but Lord Lansdowne, to whom the existing difficulties and complications of the case were best known, urged the point so strongly that Browne accepted the charge, though he did not definitely take up its duties till the following April (1892).

Before entering on Browne's assumption of the succession to Sandeman, it must be explained that the administration included (1) the Khelat state, and (2) British Beloochistan. The former was of chief importance—at first at any rate—and the deeper points involved, and the difficulties met with, will be dealt with presently. But the administration of British Beloochistan, which was being practically worked upon the lines prevalent in the Punjab, was quite a distinct matter.

Still in both of them Browne eventually found himself seriously thwarted; and it will be expedient, for the sake of clearness, to deal separately with these two charges, and to notice two other points: first, that Browne was appointed to the post by Lord Lansdowne, whose further stay in India was comparatively short, and to whom, therefore, he could not refer for support and for the continuance of the policy started; and, secondly, that an assimilation of British Beloochistan, in administrative arrangements, to the Punjab and to the "regulation" system had

already begun, which was wholly opposed to Browne's own views and to general frontier opinion, and was eventually cancelled, but not till after his death. While it lasted, it caused an infinity of trouble.

The native state of Khelat first claims our attention. The preceding pages show that Sir Robert Sandeman died in January, 1892, but that Browne did not take up the charge of the post till the following April. In the interval, Mr. Barnes, who has been already mentioned, had been officiating, and it may be reasonably assumed that, as he had been already several years in the service, was known to possess great ability, and had acquired eleven years of cognate and local experience, he was regarded, in many quarters, as the most probable and suitable successor to Sandeman. But it is clear that, in Lord Lansdowne's view, the circumstances that prevailed, including specially the Khan's attitude, the state of the Mekran tribes, and the several frontier questions, made it necessary to appoint to the post some officer of Browne's antecedents and special qualifications. This is all the more obvious when it is considered how unwilling Browne was to take the post, how he personally recognised Mr. Barnes's position and claims, and how seriously he differed from Lord Lansdowne as to the attitude and policy advisable towards the frontier tribes. But, as it was, he loyally carried out Lord Lansdowne's plans, and then, when the *crisis* arose suddenly, he acted without orders on his own judgment, asserted British supremacy, and crushed the Khan. He met with his reward in the hearty jubilation of the Mekran tribes, and their quiescent and immediate acceptance of British control. All this will be presently described at greater length.

We have first to return to the crisis. While

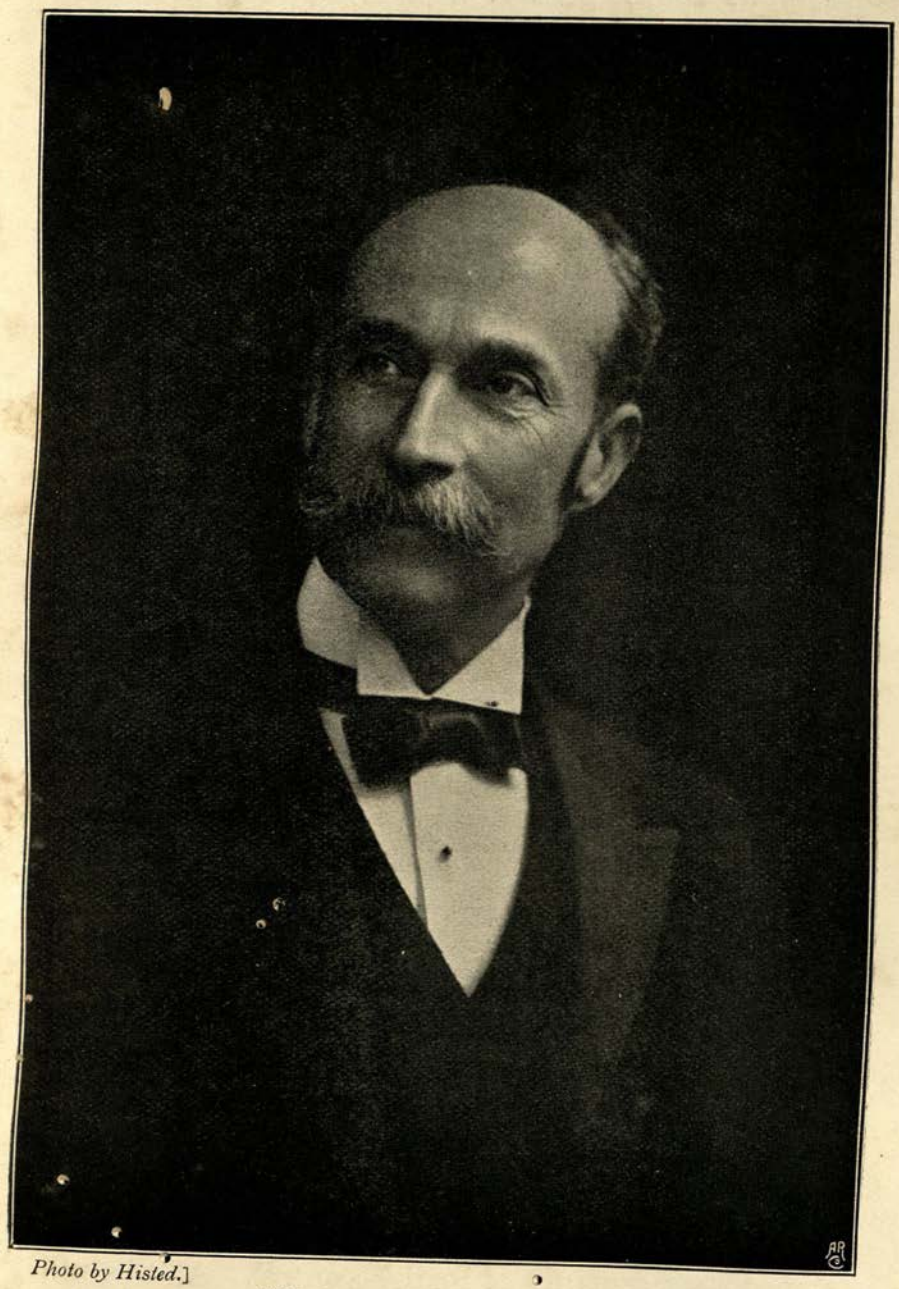


Photo by Histed.]

THE MARQUIS OF LANSDOWNE.

[*To face p.* 298.

Sandeman was still alive and specially anxious about the western clans, the Khan himself had, without apparently any suspicion in higher quarters, become excited, and had begun inquiries and investigations into palace robberies and intrigues and quarrels. He had come to the conclusion that the scandals had been serious; and therefore, taking the law into his own hands, he had later on committed several murders and carried out some brutal and ferocious punishments, while the public view in general was that nothing seriously wrong had occurred to occasion them beyond mere robberies. Gradually his conduct grew worse and worse, till finally, taking advantage of the disturbed state of the country and the withdrawal of the British troops in 1893, and apparently losing his head, he rejected the remonstrances of Government, and defied it! Browne's action was prompt: the Khan was forthwith deposed and kept under surveillance. This deposition was soon confirmed by the Government. The withdrawal of the troops, which had been settled before Browne's arrival, but was not carried out till after it, had led the Khan to assume that he was without weight and power, and hence he had tried to brave him—with the result that has been shown.

The Khan's eldest son not being satisfactory, he was, with the approval of the other Khans or chiefs of the Beloochee tribes, set aside from the succession, and Khodadad Khan's second son, as already noted, was nominated instead. He, Mir Mahmud Khan, was accordingly installed as Khan of Khelat, with the hearty approval of all the other Khans assembled at a great durbar at Quetta on November 10th, 1893. The ex-Khan is said to have acquiesced. His own fierce nature, after finding a vent in his outburst, had probably by this time subsided, and

he had begun to feel the qualms of conscience under the unavoidable recognition of his savage return for Sandeman's patient and prolonged guidance.

Now the Beloochees, as has been already shown very explicitly, though a brave race and always ready for a fight or a scrimmage, are not evil-tempered or ill-natured; the quarrels amongst the tribes were not so bitter as among the Pathans, and were generally side issues from their quarrels with the Khan owing to his despotic aims. So now, when Browne had got the new Khan under full control, he easily managed to stop the feuds among the tribes, and to bring the khanate into a state of peace and tranquillity without firing a shot; and this characteristic of his rule lasted from its earliest to its latest days.

The old Khan, now brought to his bearings, and convinced of the fact that there would be no turning back or wavering, but that with troubles there might be a lowering of the position of his family and of his son the new Khan, accepted the position contentedly —almost cordially—and seems to have become an altered man. The whole khanate appeared to rejoice, and when, next year, the new Khan was installed at Quetta, the capital of the province, with much pomp and ceremony, the scene was a jubilee.

This matter of the Khan's misconduct and his consequent removal from the throne in favour of his second son involved the first important measure Browne had to carry out in his new charge, and a very serious business it was; but fortunately his conduct was heartily approved by Lord Lansdowne, and there was not a dissentient voice in his Council.

Then came the question of the westerly tribes, the Mekranees and others who had been under the Khan's



TWO KHANS OF KHELAT, HEIR, AND ATTENDANTS.

[*To face p.* 300.

sway, and with whom there had been a perpetual state of internecine warfare. To a great extent the difficulty, that at first loomed very darkly, was reduced so greatly and so quickly as at once to reach practicable proportions. Browne's vigour, on the one hand, had quelled the original tendency to opposition; and, on the other, it soon became evident that the internecine feeling among those tribes was not an innate reality, but an outcome of the heated atmosphere brought about by the Khan's savage habits and unrestrained aspirations. On the cessation of his power no serious grounds of quarrel between the clans remained, and these tribes consequently lapsed into comparative quiescence, and heartily took part in the durbar. But their position was not at once definitely settled, and it became apparent presently that those western tribes were not to be brought, like their neighbours, under Browne's sway. For, however effective, his policy with the Khelat states was not in favour with the Government, nor supported by it.

It is not proposed to enter extensively into frontier politics, but it is permissible to say that when, in direct opposition to Browne's views, the withdrawal from Mekran was insisted on and carried out, a wave of depression was seen to pass over the political officers of the Agency. It was the first step backward from the successful forward policy of the late Sir R. Sandeman, and it shook the confidence of the politicals in themselves, and of the natives in the promises of their officers. Although subsequently Sir James Browne re-established our prestige, and won over the chiefs of the district to loyalty and peaceful behaviour, without recourse to bloodshed, this was entirely attributable to his personality, and to his power over the natives of that frontier. For

Lord Lansdowne, now taking more personal part in these affairs and desirous of completing a full understanding with Browne, again appeared on the scene in connection especially with the question that had arisen of the degree of Browne's control of the Mekranees and more westerly tribes. This had become to some extent a military question, and it had been decided to withdraw all troops from those districts, as had been proposed in Sandeman's time. He had fought hard against it, and the execution of the measure had been therefore temporarily deferred. Now, however, it was to be carried out, much to Browne's chagrin; and Lord Lansdowne appeared on the scene, chiefly, it is thought, to soften Browne's opposition and his feelings on the point. It did not lessen his objection, but it removed any feelings of opposition or chagrin in the matter; and Lord Lansdowne inspired in Browne the warmest and most cordial feelings. He felt assured of the Viceroy's confidence, and entertained the most entire faith and trust in his lordship's judgment and especially in his readiness and openness of mind in subjects of dispute or doubt.

As an instance of his personal dealings with these wild races it may be noted that he sent the most influential chief of the Mekran district with a letter to Lahore, to obtain for him a good place at the grand review of the troops assembled in connection with the Viceroy's grand durbar. This Khan had been the bitterest opponent of the Khan of Khelat, and not even Sir R. Sandeman had been able to reduce him to submission. Yet Sir James had succeeded with this wild mountaineer, who in his own country would stop at nothing to gain his own ends. As he sat in the Lahore office soliciting a ticket for

a front seat at a review, tamed by the magic touch of Sir James Browne, he looked the personification of mildness! At the close of the review he was asked how he had got on. His whole face was alight with pleasure and wonder at the magnificent troops he had seen. He realised, perhaps for the first time, what the Government had behind their political officers, and was not likely to forget it. This was one lesson in the education of these wild Khans.

Another case was that of old Bungul, the chief of the Zhob Valley, with his little band of marauding followers, who were gradually reduced to submission and brought under control by Browne's influence and methods.

What has been above written refers specially to the matters connected with the control of the khanate of Khelat, and its settlement into quiet and order on the instalment of the new Khan. Then came the two great durbars in 1893 and 1894, after which nothing special occurred about the state itself. But its rule went on quietly and successfully; and the people became more and more hearty and contented under the close personal relations they had fallen into with their ruler, and the ceaseless and unwearied advice and guidance they received from him on all the subjects they desired to discuss. It was just what had been done with such good effect on the Punjab frontier in the pre-Mutiny days of Henry Lawrence, Edwardes, and John Nicholson. The result was the same: a people who heartily approved of British rule, and supported it—in spite too of the introduction of many methods and measures of which they disapproved, but about which they yielded to Browne's guidance. Still later on they felt themselves oppressed

and worried, as the Punjabees had been, with civil courts, pleaders, costly court proceedings, cruel litigation, and other weapons of oppression open to the lowest stratum of the race of half-educated native tyrants.

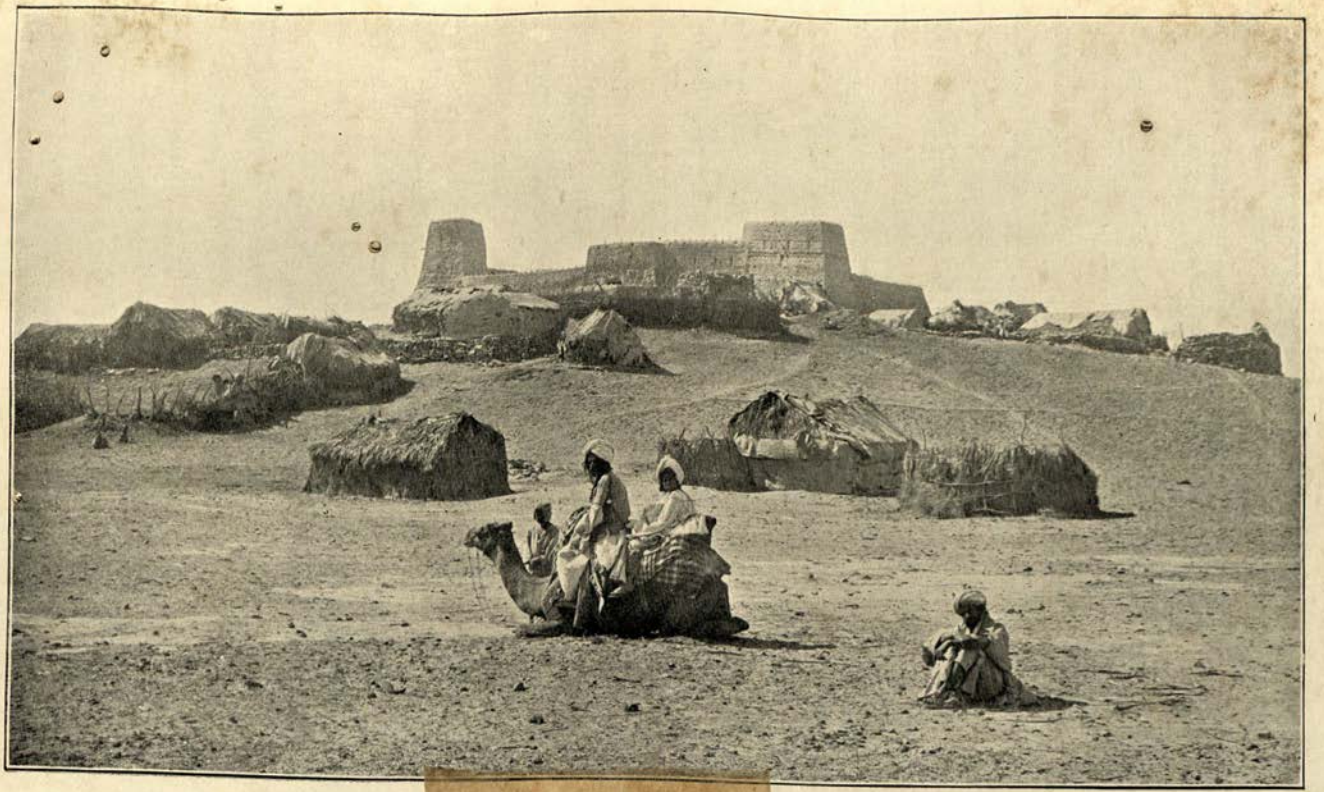
Even at the time of Browne's suppression of the old Khan—a matter of political justice and imperative necessity—the whole weight of the official headquarters of Government at Simla was felt to be against him. It was a very trying and anxious time for him, heightened if not caused by a mistaken view on the part of those officials as to his action. It seems ludicrous to say so, but, in fact, owing to interested stories against him, Sir James seems to have been considered a fire-brand, anxious, in order to gratify his ambitious ends, to stir up a big row which he over and over again did his best to avoid. One feature, one proof of this fact, was that for all the rest of his rule there was no bloodletting between the British and the Beloochees; and he strove hard always, and with success, to keep and extend the peace. His methods were his own. On his own responsibility he moved troops from Jacobabad to the Beloochee frontier to show the supporters of the wild old Khan that he, Browne, had force at hand to back up his orders if he found himself compelled to use it. This demonstration had the desired effect, and prevented the necessity for extreme measures. In the end the change was effected without bloodshed; and in place of the old barbarian, his son, with more civilised ideas, but not so advanced as to be out of touch with his people, ruled in his stead, with judgment and consideration. Browne, in fact, acted on the wise policy of displaying his strength, in order to avoid having to use it.

Having said all that is necessary about the Khelat state, we turn now to the province of British Beloochistan—*i.e.* the territory organised and ruled like the Punjab and the older districts of India. Its circumstances were then singular, and have remained so till quite a recent date. Till shortly before Browne's arrival, the system of administration in force had remained very much the same as of old, the only special or regulation methods brought into play affecting the troops and cantonments, but not meddling with the local tribes or the bulk of the native population; but latterly the thin end of the wedge of regulations had been introduced, greatly to the discomfiture of the natives.

Browne felt this at once, and forthwith essayed to bring the arrangements more into the old groove. Already the introduction had been made of regulations and courts and methods which had been so long felt to be unsuitable and mischievous in the more northerly borders of the Punjab. In the few months during which Lord Lansdowne still remained in India, and while Browne's attention was primarily occupied with the Khelat business, this matter did not trouble him much; but on his looking into these questions after a time, and especially into the position and procedure of the chief court, he felt almost aghast at the innovation; and this feeling grew and became intensified on Lord Elgin taking over the seals of office and continuing and supporting the processes which the Simla Secretariat had been introducing. The newly organised chief court to which Browne at once so strongly objected, as unsuited to the population to be dealt with, was presided over by Mr. Barnes, who has been already mentioned as a man of undoubted

ability. Browne soon found that Mr. Barnes's views and his own in the matter of the courts and of the legal polity for the Beloochees were antagonistic and practically irreconcilable. There were two high courts established in Beloochistan so far back as 1890—one for British Beloochistan, the other for the Agency territories. The former was absolutely necessary, for when people think fit to annex a tract to British India, they must set up some sort of high court. Whether it was necessary to legislate in this formal way for the Agency territories may be a question. It did not seem necessary when we established ourselves in the Kurrum, and everything there was made as informal as possible.

What took place in Browne's time was this—that whereas up to 1893 the Governor-General's Agent had to perform the duties of both the high courts, regulations were then passed empowering him to transfer such portions of the work as he thought fit to his Revenue Commissioner. Then, shortly before Browne died, the idea seems to have been started that it would be better to transfer the whole work of the high courts bodily to a Commissioner, who would instead be called Judicial Commissioner. But this was not done till after Browne's death in 1896. The idea of transferring all the high court work *en masse*, and also giving the Governor-General's Agent power to transfer such portion of it as he thought fit, had been put forward by Sandeman as early as 1891, and he preferred the former course. So that what was done in 1893 and in 1896 was in accordance with his views: whether it was in accordance with Browne's is not recorded, and may be doubted. But what Browne disliked was not the exercise of the powers, but the accompanying form-



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alities and elaborate procedure, which were a sheer mystery to the simple-minded Beloochees.

This matter, it may be at once said, embittered the whole further career of Browne in Beloochistan, especially as the new Governor-General, Lord Elgin, supported the elaborate policy of the Secretariat and opposed Browne on most of the serious questions of the province. Especially annoying was the interference with the jurisdiction of Mekran and the western clans of Beloochistan, who had accepted his sway so heartily, and with whose military status in respect of the defence of the frontier he had been so closely concerned when Quartermaster-General.

Browne, however, was allowed to set to work vigorously at the material development of the provinces, and before the end railways had been advanced, roads traversed the province, and its two capitals, Quetta and Ziarat in the mountains, were filled with suitable public offices and private buildings. Unfortunately a period of much sickness ensued in Browne's later years; but in spite of this, visitors from all parts of the world, including the present Viceroy, visited Beloochistan, and testified to its progress.

Both at Quetta and at Ziarat, and also at Zibi and wherever suitable opportunity occurred, Browne made great efforts to improve the amenities of the station. Roads, gardens, plantations, and water courses changed them from deserts into pleasure grounds. Handsome but suitable public buildings were erected—churches, residencies, public courts and offices; private houses with some efforts at taste were encouraged. The bazaars were much improved, and the natives of wealth and position were encouraged to erect better dwellings, durbar halls,

and similar buildings for their public meetings. In the course of time the whole aspect of the place was changed; and, identified as Browne was with all these improvements as well as with the entire change in the welfare of the people, known personally as he was to the whole populace, and specially to the chiefs, Sardars, and men of mark, adored by the Ghilzyes, and regarded by so many as a Mullah and a saint—he held a position in Beloochistan which no one else could possibly attain.

As with the Khelat state, so with British Beloochistan and its frontiers: Browne worked indefatigably for its improvements in all respects. For the British stations, there was, and there could be, no sort of question; but after Lord Lansdowne's departure and the visit and durbar of the new Viceroy, other influences disturbed the policy and characteristics of the rule, and pressed greatly on Browne's mind. But more need not be said on this matter—except that the legal arrangements and the methods of the regulation provinces affected the equanimity of the Beloochee population very seriously, and doubled the task that necessarily devolved on Browne of assuaging their irritation and keeping them quiet.

Much was going on in the more rural parts of the province; and he had to keep a very watchful eye on the borders and especially on the Wuzeerees. And at length they made an incursion. They were promptly met and defeated, and heavily punished. But, in point of fact, the overt action of the tribes was not the matter that was troubling Browne. With his sensitive instincts, and his true insight into the character and feelings of the hill tribes, and especially with his intimate relations with the



SIR JAMES BROWNE, FAMILY, AND STAFF AT QUETTA.

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Ghilzyes, he was alive to the existence of a very widespread wave of native hostility, which in the year after his death broke over the whole northern border. Anarchy had already broken out in Chitral, Swat, and Bajour, and the British representative and the troops with him were being besieged in Gilgit. But in that year (1897) the Beloochee border itself suffered from a murderous attack by the tribesmen of the Tochi Valley, when Mr. Gee, the political officer, was killed along with some of his subordinates and escort. This led to the country of the tribesmen being traversed by our troops, some 7,000 men and their fortified positions being destroyed and levelled, the tribesmen fined, and their chiefs imprisoned.

In 1897, as alluded to, an exceptionally large series of frontier expeditions and wars had to be undertaken. There were at least six—against respectively (1) Malakand, in Swat and Bajour, (2) the Mohmunds, (3) the Utman Kheyls, (4) the Bonairs (Browne's friends of 1863), (5) the Kurum Valley, and (6) the Afreedees and Orakzyes of the Khyber and Tirah. In this latter campaign some 44,000 troops were employed, in all six about 90,000, involving an outlay of about forty-five lakhs of rupees.

Considering the previous history of those northern frontier hostilities, and the long interval of the comparative quiescence since the Umbeyla war, it can hardly be doubted that a change had come over both the political management of the tribes and the military methods for coercing them; and it may be mentioned as a singular, but in no way a significant, fact that those two great struggles occurred in the times of the two Lords Elgin, father and son.

It was unfortunate, for many reasons, that the start of the new policy—regulations and high courts—for

the administration of Beloochistan was contemporaneous with the beginning of Browne's comparative failure in health. He had long been subject to gout, but had never allowed himself to let it master him or interfere with his work. But he was now beginning to think, especially under his altered relations with Government, that it was time for him to be preparing for a change—a permanent change—to England and for employment there. In due course he sent Lady Browne and his family home, although he continued very fully the hospitalities and amenities of the ruler of the province; the more so that it was the site of absorbing interest with a series of travellers of note and position—an interest much beyond what was at that time excited by any other part of India. With this remark the general story of Browne's rule of Beloochistan may fairly close.

CHAPTER XX

TWO GREAT DURBARS: 1893-4. *PRESS ACCOUNTS*

TWO GREAT DURBARS AT QUETTA—THE DURBAR OF 1893 HELD BY SIR JAMES BROWNE—HIS SPEECH —LORD ELGIN'S SPEECH AT THE DURBAR OF 1893— INSTALLATION OF THE KHAN OF KHELAT AS GRAND COMMANDER OF THE ORDER OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE.

WE have reserved the full account of the durbar[1] when the new Khan of Khelat was installed at Quetta; which was reported in the Press as follows:

"The installation of H.H. Mir Mahmud Khan as Beglar Begi and Khan of Khelat took place at the Gymkhana ground at Quetta, the capital of Beloochistan, on Friday, November 10th, 1893, when a grand durbar was held by Sir James Browne, Agent to the Governor-General, and the Khan was installed in a most impressive manner, with all the accessories of military pomp and grandeur.

"On either side of the street bisecting the platform were seated on the right the Sarawan Sardars and followers, while on the left the Jhallawan Sardars and followers.

"The assemblage of the European populace and their families, together with the innumerable Sardars of various tribes, and, the semicircle of villagers and others who were in swarms on the north side, the formidable array of the garrison, all blended into a scene of one vast expanse of the greatest contrast,

[1] See page 380.

yet an imposing sight of ceremony. . . . The Khan arrived about 11.30 a.m., accompanied by his brother and Major Temple, the Political Agent of Khelat, and escorted by a bodyguard twenty-four strong. He was received at the arch by Major Gaisford, Political Agent, Quetta, and Captain Stratton, First Assistant to the Agent Governor-General, who accompanied him to the edge of the carpet, where he dismounted and was met by H. S. Barnes, Esq., C.S., the Revenue Commissioner, who conducted him to his seat, a Guard of Honour presenting arms and the band of the Prince of Wales' Grenadiers playing.

"At 11.45 a.m. General Sir James Browne arrived accompanied by General Luck, escorted by their respective staffs and a detachment of cavalry. They were received at the edge of the platform by the Khan in company with Mr. Barnes, amid the usual salutes. After a slight pause, Sir James rose, and first thanking the ladies and gentlemen for the trouble they had taken in coming and thus showing the interest they felt in matters concerning the natives in this country, he addressed the Khan and the assemblage in Hindustani as follows:

"'Mir Mahmud Khan, Khan of Khelat, Beglar Begi and Wali of Khelat, Sardars of the Jirgah, Maliks, etc., You have assembled together on an auspicious day, viz. Friday, to witness a scene—the installation of the Khan—which but very few of those assembled here have ever witnessed before: an event which is the closing phase of the policy which has been hitherto followed—an episode which will not be forgotten by the spectators present as long as they live, and will be talked of hereafter long after all here have passed away.

"'I would remind you that Mir Mahmud Khan has for some time past been recognised as Khan by the Government in England, by the Government in India, by myself, and by the Sardars of the country both Jhallawan and Sarawan. I have to assure you that it would not have been possible, whether the present ceremony had taken place or not, for the Government to have retraced its steps in any case. The Government, as well as the Sardars of the Jirgah, have already taken the important step, in the interests of Beloochistan at large, of electing Mir Mahmud Khan as

the Khan of Khelat, and neither the one nor the other could have retrogressed. On the present occasion, both in accordance with the immemorial custom of not only this, but many other nations, and also to make assurance doubly sure, Mir Mahmud Khan is about to be formally and publicly installed as Khan of Khelat, by myself as representative of the British Government—an event which has never before taken place in the annals of Beloochistan.

"'The occurrences which have led up to and rendered necessary the course of action which is terminating in the present climax is too fresh in your minds to need more than a passing reference on my part. Moreover, Sardars of Sarawan and Jhallawan, you were yourselves sharers and advisers in the course which has been taken, and which was as a matter of fact inevitable. You will bear in mind that the events which led to the necessity for the present installation were not sought by the British Government, but were forced on us. It will always be a source of great regret to me all my life that I have been the unwilling instrument for carrying out a course of policy which was not dictated by any personal feeling or desire to introduce changes into Beloochistan. What has taken place was done solely and entirely in the interests of the people of this country at large, and for the public benefit.

"'Khan Sahib Wali of Khelat, I have to remind you of the high position which you have inherited as of right from your ancestors, and which it is my most earnest hope you will worthily fill, both with credit to yourself and with advantage to those who have been placed under you. You should primarily bear in mind all that is conveyed in the old-time motto, "*marde az martaba khud majbar ast*"—*noblesse oblige*. A man of high rank and lofty position is compelled to act with generosity and a keen sense of honour in order to maintain his self-respect as well as the regard of a whole nation. Of necessity you must do justice to yourself, to obtain the praise not of self-seekers and flatterers, but the disinterested praise of the great majority. By this alone can you escape the sense of shame attendant on the scorn and contumely which will inevitably follow if you act unjustly and dishonourably that you may benefit

yourself or fill your treasury. *Noblesse oblige*—your position binds you and compels you to act honourably.

"'There is not, nor can there ever be, any real advantage obtainable from merely hoarding and filling your treasury with money extracted by oppression and tyranny from the hands of ryats, hardened by honest industry; what matters it if your treasury be empty, if your bazaars be full? When your streets are crowded, the revenue will of itself pour into your treasury in a ceaseless flood. It will not be necessary to oppress men in order to obtain it; it will be readily and willingly paid without the exercise of force. Far better is it to spend wisely for the benefit of the country than to hoard and benefit neither yourself nor others, and in addition lose the respect and regard in which others will hold you. Just as neither heat nor benefit is obtainable from firewood until it is consumed, so neither pleasure nor happiness is obtainable from money until it is spent. Do not think that because the working-man or the Government servant puts by money, therefore you should. The former saves money while he is earning it because he knows that the time must come when he cannot earn it. Your case is different. Your revenue is not for a term of years, but for the term of your life. It will not fail you because you have grown old. Money is a seed, which may bring forth twofold or tenfold.

"'He who scatters gold will gather a golden harvest; but he who withholds his hand from the seed, from him will the harvest be withheld. Do not imagine that I am calling upon you to do what we do not do ourselves. Do not suppose that because the British Government spends generously it has a great hoard of money saved up and lying in the treasuries of the country. The Government has no money saved up whatever. It is enabled to spend because its revenue is immense, owing to the general sense of security and peace which pervades whole nations under the ægis of England. We do not want to hoard money—we can always get it, and it flows in because the land is cultivated, the people at rest, and the bazaars are full. So little is hoarded money a necessity that every civilised Government throughout the world is carried on by debt. However, I am



QUETTA CEREMONIAL. INSTALLATION OF KHAN OF KHELAT.

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not impressing on you the advisability of borrowing, but only the uselessness of objectlessly hoarding. There is one point to which I would specially call your attention—you must differentiate between your private fortune and the money which comes to you and which has to be spent for the public advantage. You must ever bear in mind that the State is not a mere mine out of which to dig money. A portion no doubt belongs to you, but a large share is in reality the right of the public, and should be employed on affairs which have to be taken up by Government because the public could not satisfactorily undertake them, such as roads, canals, the post, and a variety of other desiderata too numerous to mention. As Khan of Khelat you have undoubted rights—I have no wish to deprive you of them—but so also you have obligations, and you cannot divest yourself of them. Remember, moreover, that the greater your rights are the greater your obligations will be. If you claim the one, you must accept the other. You can no more have the rights only than you can have the pleasures of life only, such as taste, hearing, sight, etc., without the pains to which all flesh is heir without exception. The one is a natural concomitant of the other. Neither you nor I, nor the united force of all mankind, can alter such natural laws as those of rights and obligations. When money has accumulated it can no doubt be spent in a manner which for the time being may be pleasant, but which in the long run will not be beneficial either to the spender or to his reputation. A young man with unlimited money has no doubt temptations which I feel sure in your case will not be given way to.

"'Above all, Khan Sahib, I have to remind you that the road of tyranny, of oppression, of injustice, is the road which leads to your own downfall and ruin. As Khan you should provide yourself with carefully selected subordinates. The British Government do not attempt to govern with a few men whose trustworthiness is a matter of doubt. Your country is large. Your employees constitute your eyes and your ears. Without them you can neither see nor hear. A ruler without information is as a man in the dark. It matters little what his individual acuteness may be; it matters little to what pitch

he may have been trained; it will matter little what care he may have taken or to what pains he may have put himself: without reliable and correct information, obtainable only from his subordinates, he is as a blind man groping in the dark, who knows and can know little of whither he may be going. The ultimate destination of the misguided blind who surrender the guidance of their destinies to those who cannot see is too much a matter of proverbial notoriety to need either explanation or allusion from me.

"'Sardars of the Jirgah and others, remember that if the Khan has his rights and obligations so also have you. Many of you are leaders of great tribes. As your positions are important so also is your influence far and ever wide and spread. Many cases are constantly in your hands for decision.

"'You the Sardars should remember that there are two sides to a question and that for years past enmity has existed between yourselves and the Khan. An admirable opportunity is now afforded you of burying all feelings of animosity. You should let bygones be bygones. You should endeavour on both sides to forget the traditional enmity which has hitherto so unfortunately existed.

"'Should any difference hereafter arise, a court of arbitration will always be at hand, which both Khan and Sardars will be able to regard with confidence, as being unbiassed and ready to do justice on the evidence before it. In the reign of Nasir Khan the Great the greatest enmity in council existed between the Khan and the Sardars, and it should be the object of the Sardars to place all their experience, and the wisdom gained from age and knowledge, at the service of the Khan. To embarrass him will not benefit either party.

"'It is the wish of the British Government, and it has moreover been agreed to by the Khan, that the Jhallawan Sardars should be in as nearly the same position as possible as that enjoyed by the Sarawan Sardars. The Jhallawan Sardars have already had an exceptionally good opportunity of showing that they could further the wishes of the British Government. They have however hitherto foolishly refused to partake of the hospitality and kindness which

it was our intention to extend to them, if they do not by their action, or inaction, prevent us from doing so.

"'You should all remember that it is not my object in any sense to interfere with the ancient customs and laws of this state, as long as they are neither barbarous nor cruel. Indeed, I regard the maintenance of ancient usages as highly beneficial, and altogether advisable. Without changing your customs, you can graft on to them what is found to be most advisable and useful amongst the customs of other nations. You are all aware that the stones of good apricots and plums (*alu bokhara*) will not produce the best fruit if sown in the ground. It is necessary to take a bud or a graft from a good tree and make it grow on another root, before the best fruit is obtainable. So also before the best result will be obtained from the Belooch and Brahui nation, a carefully selected portion of what is best in the laws of other nations will have to be assimilated; while the general body of the laws and customs is allowed to remain unchanged. The English have knowledge and experience which the Beloochees have not got. Whereas Belooch customs are no doubt in many ways better suited to the habits and customs of the Beloochees themselves, they should endeavour to take all that would benefit them from the English laws and customs and adopt them to the old Belooch stock.

"'Mir Mahmud Khan and Sardars, you should endeavour to strive not merely for your own ends, but also for the benefit of the mass. Let no man, either Khan, or Sardar, or subject, believe that he can ever satisfy himself by striving for himself alone, at the cost of pain to others. True happiness consists in securing the welfare of others. Do not think that what I have said is the accidental expression in words of fortuitous ideas and thoughts. I have thought carefully and spoken advisedly, in accordance with a proverb which may be paraphrased thus: "The Maker made man with two eyes, and two ears, and but one tongue, that he look twice and listen twice ere he speaks once."

"'A word or two more and I shall have done. There is an Arabic saying which reminds men that the world is but a bridge—"pass ye by it, ye cannot

remain on it, the rest is unseen." Some day your time for leaving it will come. Do not believe then that your happiness will then consist in remembering that your treasury has been full—you cannot carry it away—or that you extracted value out of the hands of toilworn labourers, or that you killed this person, or made away with that individual. If you as Khan of Khelat have made good use of the opportunities fate may have thrown in your way, your pleasure will consist in remembering that you were in a position of the highest responsibility, and that you used it as a solemn trust from an unseen existing power, in bettering the lot of your subjects and others less fortunate than yourself. Do not imagine that because outrages may have been inflicted by rulers in times gone by, it is expedient or even possible to perpetrate them now. From the beginning of time to the present day the world has been a moving tide of change—indeed, there is no necessity to look back very far to assure yourself of this; the time of an ordinary life affords quite sufficient experience. The wise ruler is he who accommodates his action to the feelings and beliefs of the time in which he lives. You cannot necessarily act now as you might have acted—and acted successfully—200 years ago. Your surroundings have greatly changed from what they once were. You also must change with them. Indeed, recent events have shown that it would now be impossible to act in the Khelat state in the manner in which action was taken even so short a time as one year back. The Government of Khelat as now constituted is like a building which is based upon a rock, that rock being the power of an empire whose rule extends over half the world. It is my duty to warn all that it is the set and deliberate purpose of the British Government that Mir Mahmud Khan should be maintained and supported in his position as long as he is worthy of it. Further, that any one contesting or opposing this determination will have to deal with the whole might of the greatest empire in the world—assuredly such a one will ensure his own destruction sooner or later. It is my duty to say this. It is, however, with pleasure that I remind you that H.M. the Queen looks without doubt or fear on the Khan, and on the Sardars

of Beloochistan, as being the loyal defenders of her sovereignty on the frontier.

"'Mir Mahmud Khan, now under the eyes of the British officers here present, in the presence of the leading Sardars of Beloochistan, in the hearing of your subjects, servants, the tribesmen and others, by the mandate of the Viceroy, under the orders of Government, I as Agent Governor-General and Chief Commissioner and representative of British authority, publicly proclaim you, Mir Mahmud Khan, to be Beglar Begi and Wali of Khelat.'

"'The Khan briefly replied to Sir James in Hindustani as follows:

"'I am very thankful to you, Sir James Browne, and also to His Excellency the Viceroy, for the kind treatment I have received at your hands. I can assure you that I will act righteously and uprightly, and will endeavour, to the best of my ability, to do good deeds which will please the British Government.' He then asked his Mustaufi to read the following on his behalf as an answer to Sir James's speech:

"Officers, gentlemen, and Sardars,—To-day is that auspicious occasion on which by the mandate of Her Majesty the Queen Empress, and on behalf of His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General, General Sir James Browne has declared me Wali of my State. For this I tender my heartfelt thanks to Sir James, and through him to Her Majesty the Queen Empress and His Excellency the Viceroy. I have not taken the reins of the administration of my State in my own hands. I can assure you that to the best of my ability I will endeavour to act upon the kindly advice which Sir James has given me in your presence. I will treat my subjects with justice and kindness, and will always be a faithful ally to the British Government. The British Government too will, I beg, help me in all matters concerning my State. I will devote myself to make my country flourish and in bettering the position of my people.

"'I reiterate my cordial thanks to General Sir James Browne, and I hope that the friendly relations which now exist between my State and the British Government will remain for ever unchanged.'

"At the conclusion of this khilats worth 25,000

rupees, including a diamond sirpech worth Rs. 10,000, were presented to the Khan. The Belooch Sardars, led by Sir James, loudly called out '*Mubarak baad*' to the Khan: and thus ended this special durbar."

Next year, however, a new Viceroy, Lord Elgin, who had come to India in the interval, visited Quetta and held a durbar of his own; and as his address dealt almost entirely with the Khelat state and not the rule of British Beloochistan, the account of the proceedings on that occasion will now be given. The following is the Press account of the ceremony:—

"The grand durbar, which had been eagerly looked forward to by the people of this province, came off this afternoon as arranged, with all the pomp and circumstance of a State ceremonial, and attracted large crowds of the native public, who began to collect on the racecourse long before two o'clock. Everything that could be done to lend a gay and festive appearance to the grandstand was carried out with much taste by the responsible officials. A couple of triumphal arches, hung with yellow silk, and supporting the Star of India in the centre, were erected about two hundred yards on either side of the grandstand, the intervening space being marked off with vari-coloured venetian masts with festoons of flags between. The dais, upon which were placed the viceregal throne and handsome silver-mounted chairs for His Highness the Khan and the Commander-in-chief, was richly carpeted with gold Kashmiri work upon a red ground. The middle and upper tiers of the stand were occupied by ladies and other visitors, while a special box was railed off for the countess, and the highest tier accommodated such members of the European and Parsi communities as had obtained tickets. Below the dais, and to the right of it, were seated in consecutive order the superior native Government officials, Sarawans, Jhallawans, Quetta Sardars and Maliks, Pesheen Sardars and Maliks, Khojak Sardars and Maliks, the municipality and minor officials. To the left were the officials of His Highness the Khan



LORD ROBERTS AND STAFF AT QUETTA.

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and the Jam, and Thul Chotiali and Zhob Sardars and Maliks. Inside the oval formed by the course the whole of the troops in garrison were massed facing the stand, the infantry in the centre, the heavy batteries to the right and left, and the mountain battery and Sappers and Miners in the rear. The 7th Bombay Lancers lined the road from the Residency to the course.

"The first important personage to arrive was the Jam of Lus Beyla, who was accompanied by Captain Stratton, the newly appointed Political Agent for South-eastern Beloochistan. Next followed the Commander-in-chief and Mrs. Luck, who in turn were followed by the Countess of Elgin and Miss Browne, and in quick succession came Sir James Browne, Captain Manners Smith, His Highness the Khan of Khelat with his younger brother Mir Bahram Khan, accompanied by Major Temple. Punctually at 3.13 His Excellency the Viceroy, in the robes of the Grand Master of the Indian Empire, was driven up in a State carriage and four with outriders, accompanied by the Secretary of the Order, Mr. Cuningham, Foreign Secretary and an aide-de-camp. When His Excellency's carriage came in sight the artillery fired thirty-one guns, and when nearing the stand the troops gave the royal salute, the band playing the National Anthem.

"His Excellency having taken his seat, Sir James Browne stepped forward and introduced the Khan, and addressing the Viceroy gave a brief historical sketch of Beloochistan and its people during the last decade, dwelling with a high eulogium upon the services of Sir Robert Sandeman, the Agent of the Governor-General. He went on to draw a vivid picture of Beloochistan before the advent of that distinguished statesman, and having explained to His Excellency the different clans and tribes represented by the Chiefs and Maliks sitting before him, concluded with a fitting acknowledgment of the aid he had received during his term of office from the officials of the Agency.

"The Foreign Secretary then stepped forward and read Her Majesty's warrant directing His Excellency to confer upon His Highness the Khan of Khelat the insignia of Grand Commander of the Indian

Empire, to which Her Majesty has been pleased to appoint him. His Highness was then conducted to the left of the dais by the Secretary and Under Secretary of the Foreign Departments, who invested him with the robe and sash of the Order and fixed the star to his left breast, and presented him to His Excellency, who put the collar of the Order round his neck. The assembly having taken their seats, after standing during the reading of the royal warrant, the Grand Master, remaining seated, spoke as follows:

"'Your Highness, Chiefs and Sardars of the Khelat State and the Beloochistan Agency,—Nearly five years have passed since my predecessor met you here. By the inexorable laws of human existence such a period must bring in its train many changes, whether for good or evil, and I could not expect to find myself here under circumstances precisely similar to those of Lord Lansdowne's visit. To one of those changes, which I know every one here deplores, I should like to allude at the outset. Lord Lansdowne described the officer standing at his side as one "who has the confidence of the Government of India, and whose name will for all time be honourably connected with this portion of the Indian Empire." I had not the privilege of the acquaintance of Sir Robert Sandeman, but there are some cases in which the record is plain beyond dispute. There can be no doubt that by Sir Robert Sandeman's premature death the Government of India lost an officer to whose indomitable courage and perseverance they owed much, and the people of Beloochistan a friend whose knowledge of them and trust in them they recognised by returning to him the largest measure of confidence. I have been glad to observe in Quetta many signs that his name is fresh in your remembrance. I am glad to learn that the more permanent tribute to his memory which you contemplate will take a form that will bear testimony to his belief in and respect for your native institutions. I shall be more glad to see and hear evidence of increasing prosperity in Quetta and Beloochistan, because we can, in my opinion, find no better means of honouring him than by carrying on his life's work. I must also unite with you in lamenting the deaths of Sir Assad Khan, Chief of the Sarawans, and Sardar

Shingul Khan, Chief of Zhob. They were men from whom the Government had received much assistance, cut short by their untimely deaths.

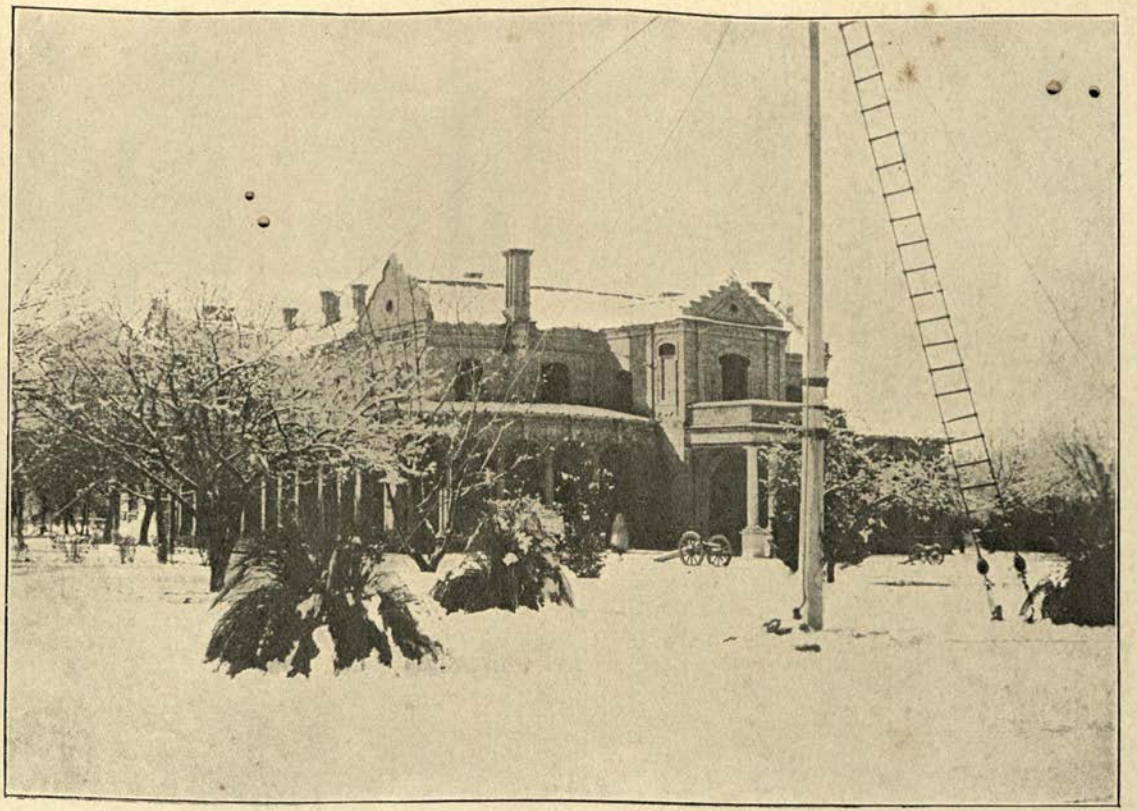
"'Turning from these melancholy topics to the history of the district, I find here too changes which the progress of events has made inevitable. I do not intend to recapitulate the circumstances which resulted in Your Highness being called upon to assume the Government of Khelat. They will no doubt be fresh in the memory of my hearers. Although the time has as yet been short, it has been necessary for Your Highness to come to some decisions of importance for the welfare of your State, and I rejoice to be assured by Sir James Browne, than whom Your Highness has no warmer friend, that you, in the policy you have adopted, have shown that you have a due sense of the responsibilities of your position. We, the British Government, look to Your Highness so to administer the affairs of Khelat that peace, good order, and contentment may prevail within its borders. That is the return which we have a right to claim for the protection which we can secure to you from outside aggression, and which we are now making more definite by the demarcation of the frontier. We seek not to interfere with the local administration. It is our settled policy to pay all the respect we can, here and elsewhere, to the laws and usages, religious and social, to which the people are accustomed. Rightly administered they will best supply the needs of the people, and it is for Your Highness, with the advice and assistance of your chiefs and counsellers, to see that it cannot be laid to your charge that they have failed through want of energy or good-will on your part.

"'Your Highness, Chiefs and Sardars, I do not think I can use a more powerful argument than ask you to look around. There must be men here present who can remember this prospect before us when it showed neither house, nor tree, nor cultivated field. The material prosperity, which we can almost see growing around us, can be yours if you choose to take it. It is the duty of a ruler to make a good use of the resources of his State. If they are not used properly, or if they are not used at all for the purposes of public utility, depend upon it not

only will the resources of the State decay, but the difficulties of managing the State will increase; but if they are wisely expended, they will return to you a hundredfold. The railway has opened up to you the markets of the world. It is for you to step in and reap the profits. You have a country which can supply fruit and other agricultural produce, which is well fitted for the breeding of horses, and whose mineral resources are undeveloped. It is with much satisfaction that I have heard that Your Highness, by your gracious treatment of the Jhallawans, has shown your readiness to encourage those who will lay aside ancient feuds and live a peaceable life. It has also been wisely determined to construct a road to Khelat, for nothing will better help the development of your country than additions made to the facilities for travel. Your Highness knows well that in the representative of the British Government you have an adviser of great experience, who has deserved your confidence, and I counsel you to take advantage of his assistance, and if the services of officers trained in works of any description be required, so as to enable you to construct them most economically and to the best advantage, there will be no difficulty in putting them at your disposal.

"'Your Highness, Chiefs and Sardars, I have thought it incumbent on me to speak to you words of counsel on this occasion. It is, I think, an occasion of some importance to the future of Beloochistan. I rejoice that, coming here as I do, on the earliest possible opportunity, I am able to see the germs of a prosperous future for this country. I rejoice that it is my privilege to convey to Your Highness, by means of the ceremony in which we have just taken part, the assurance that Her Majesty the Queen-Empress sympathises with and appreciates the efforts which Your Highness is making to develop the prosperity of your territory and its inhabitants. I trust that the encouragement thus given by Her Majesty will stimulate Your Highness to persevere in the course of progress, and if, as is most likely, my visit is not repeated, that my successor, when he follows me will be able to congratulate you on the realisation of the hopes which I have ventured to foreshadow.

"'Chiefs and Sardars, knowing the loyalty which



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[*To face p.* 324.

has animated you in the past, I cannot but think that in the honour now done to His Highness you will feel you have a share. I call upon you to recollect it. His Highness may have a hold of the reins, but he will need willing hands to help him in his work. See that you do not fail him. And to those here present, who are more directly subject to British rule, I would only add that the Government of India, while it cannot tolerate or permit disorder, is ready and willing to recognise and reward true and loyal service. I must bid you farewell. I shall carry with me deeply engraven in my memory the scene now before me, and the interest which it inspires in me for the people of Beloochistan will animate me with a desire to remain your firm friend in time to come.'

"This speech having been translated to His Highness and the chiefs by Mirza Abdulla, Mir Munshi to the Agency, khilats were offered by the Khan of Khelat, the Jam of Lus Beyla and the principal chiefs and Sardars, who were afterwards presented to His Excellency by the political agents of their respective districts—those from Khelat by Major Temple, those from Quetta and Pesheen by Colonel Gaisford, and those from Zhob and Thul Chotiali by Captain Archer —after which His Excellency left the durbar under a royal salute, accompanied by the Foreign Secretary and an aide-de-camp; the various chiefs and high Government officers following in the same order they arrived. A conspicuous figure in the assembly was the far-famed Mr. Bux, decked in his dress and sword of honour, his breast decorated with the Kabul mission medal of 1893, who in his own line has contributed materially to the pleasure of the viceregal visit.

"Their Excellencies the Viceroy and the Countess of Elgin and the Commander-in-chief patronised the club theatre in the evening, where a variety entertainment, followed by the comedietta *The Duchess of Bayswater and Co.*, was given by the Quetta amateurs, who well sustained their reputation on the occasion. After dark a few of the highest peaks on the hills round Quetta were bright with bonfires, and the effect was pretty.

"To-morrow morning His Excellency the Viceroy leaves with a portion of his staff by the Bolan route

in charge of Mr. Hodson, the Engineer-in-chief, who will show his lordship all the interesting points of this interesting line, which it is estimated will be ready in a couple of years. The countess proceeds by special train *viâ* Hurnai to await Lord Elgin's arrival at Sibi, while His Excellency the Commander-in-chief goes by ordinary mail to Hyderabad and Karachi, so that in a few hours Quetta will be deprived of the distinguished visitors whose arrival and stay here have been talked of for months gone by. Much credit is due to Mr. Richie and Mr. Hawkes, the district locomotive and traffic superintendents, for the care and assiduity with which they have studied the comfort of their excellencies during their journeys, and to Mr. McNally, station-master at Quetta, for his untiring attentions and excellent platform arrangements."

CHAPTER XXI

AFGHANISTAN: 1888–96

FRONTIER ADMINISTRATION AND POLICY—PUNJAB AND BELOOCHISTAN CONTRASTED—LAST PHASE OF THE MULLAH EPISODE.

WE have now dealt fully with Browne's relations with Khelat and British Beloochistan and the chief public ceremonials that were held in connection with them. It remains to describe his proceedings and attitude to the two neighbouring territories, Afghanistan and Scinde. There is no necessity to refer specially to any connection with the Punjab; but in a later part his own criticism will be given of the methods and practice prevalent in the Punjab as contrasted with those that had been adopted for Beloochistan.

To turn, then, to South Afghanistan. Apart from the various direct functions of his administrative post, Browne was occasionally troubled with political correspondence with neighbouring states across the borders, and thus had to deal with grievances of which the features became sometimes very unpleasant. One of these cases may be described, without mentioning the specific facts. A high Afghan official had, in connection with a tribal quarrel, raided into Beloochistan and carried off some families and prisoners who were obnoxious to the Ameer or his

people. As usual in such raids, some murders and barbarities were committed. The raid had been made from a position where the Afghans had no business to be at all, and where they ostentatiously immured their captives in the local gaol. This deed caused much excitement, was widely known, and was regarded as a deliberate and wanton defiance by the Afghan authorities of the British Government. The matter had of course to be finally settled between the ruling powers, but in the meanwhile Browne stopped the carriage into Afghanistan of a large *kafila* of warlike stores then on its way for the Ameer through Beloochistan, and took some of the people as hostages, made some reprisals, and established a "close border" on the *southern* frontier while on the other hand remaining most friendly on the *northern*. He desired to adopt this policy permanently, and urged it on the Government.

What he advocated was a system of direct local reprisals against the petty authorities actually implicated, as in contrast with the policy of spreading the origin of the wrong-doing and implicating higher authorities. "Arsenic in small doses" as contrasted with "large doses" was his symbol; and a specific point was the studious avoidance of allowing extraneous matters, such as Russian intrigue, being named, still more of dragging them into the question; on the principle that you may slap an elephant's trunk when you do not think of stroking a tiger's snout. Browne was strong on the view that the suppression of the local misdeeds of Afghans, by local action was a sound practical policy and not beneath the diplomacy or the dignity of the great Government of India—practical because it tended to force the Ameer to recognise the fact that the

local lieutenants of that Government were trusted to watch his, the Ameer's, officers and check their misdeeds vigorously: to give sharp and decisive *ripostes* to acts of insolence. Browne was encouraged in his views and methods by his knowledge of their being in entire unison with those of his predecessor Sandeman.

One factor in our relations with Afghanistan that may be alluded to is the question of Seistan. Its importance lay in its geographical position at the junction of three empires, combined with the attraction it seemed to possess for Russian intrigues. But beyond the fact that he kept a keen watch on it, Browne did not—overtly at any rate—meddle with the questions connected with it.

During the *régime* of Sir James Browne's distinguished predecessor, Sir Robert Sandeman, the relations between the authorities of Scinde and Beloochistan had unfortunately not been of a very cordial character, for originally the Commissioner in Scinde was also Political Agent for Beloochistan. Sir William Merewether was the last apostle of the old school, who believed not in meddling beyond the border, even to suppress tribal feuds or anarchy. He held that the policy of the British Government should be restricted to calling on the Khan of Khelat to keep order, and to sending the Scinde horse to coerce him, or to punish outlaws whenever they interfered with British subjects. Sir Robert Sandeman discovered a better way—at any rate, a way more pleasing to the Government of India. The policy of non-interference was abandoned, and the pacification of Beloochistan was placed in Sir Robert's hands entirely. Such a change could not but create a feeling akin to soreness and jealousy

in Scinde, which lasted more or less till Sir Robert Sandeman's death. It was one of Sir James Browne's achievements, by tact and the wonderful charm of his personality, to quench such feelings entirely. The Commissioner of Scinde on one side of the border soon took as much pleasure in supporting the Agent to the Governor-General as did the Agent to the Governor-General in backing the Commissioner in Scinde. This cordial relation between the chiefs quickly extended to the subordinates, and friction between the officers of Beloochistan and Scinde, which previously had been the cause of some injury to the public service, ceased at once and for ever.

The wild frontier of Scinde, with its frowning hills, is the home of fierce Beloochee and Brahui tribes, accustomed for generations to internecine feuds, varied by raids on the quiet, well-to-do plains of Scinde. Half a century of good management by wardens of the marches such as Frere, Jacob, and the brothers Green had contributed greatly to tame the Beloochees. Their razzias were repelled, and many were induced to take up the rôle of peaceful cultivators. But even after our occupation of Quetta the Old Adam still remained strong; and occasionally adventurers would trespass into Scinde and collect tribute, harry flocks of camels or sheep or goats, or take bloody revenge for some fancied wrong or in the pursuit of some old vendetta. On the other hand Scinde subjects would trespass beyond the boundary; or the Scinde police, feeling themselves protected by the omnipotent British Government, would go beyond their jurisdiction, exceed their powers, and collision between them and the tribes would be the result. On one occasion the inspector of a body of Scinde Frontier Police, the chief of the tribe of Chuttos,

actually marched with his men, servants of the British Government, to attack a rival chief, and wipe out some ancestral quarrel. Incidents of this kind were calculated to raise bad blood between the Agency and Scinde, more especially when the tribal levies were organised and entrusted with the duty of keeping order in Beloochistan. But, thanks to Sir James Browne's influence, justice was always done to the Scindees so far as the circumstances admitted of justice—murderers were seized and handed over, stolen camels were restored, and the people on either side of the border felt that they could no longer play the authorities of Beloochistan against Scinde or of Scinde against Beloochistan; a kind of policy which even the most barbarous of Orientals are astute enough to use successfully, if the opportunity be given them. Scinde having been British territory for fifty years, its police organisation was better than in Beloochistan, where Sir James Browne had to depend on the chiefs of the tribes; so the Scinde authorities were perhaps able to do more for Sir James Browne than he could for Scinde. But his strong hand kept the Beloochistan tribes in order, and, taking it all round, the trouble which they gave to Scinde was not worth mentioning.

So long as women and camels and horses exist, so long must outrages from Beloochees be looked for. In illustration of the difference between the two countries of Scinde and Beloochistan, the treatment of the murderers of faithless wives may be instanced. The Beloochees pride themselves on the honour of their women, and can point with justifiable satisfaction to the fact that such a thing as a Beloochee public woman does not exist, and to maintain this high standard they fail not, often very harshly, to

slaughter any woman whose chastity is even doubtful. Beloochee women are not kept behind the purdah, but are free as their English sisters. Yet a smile or even a glance at another man has often proved the death of a poor girl. A junta is formed of the two families—the husband's and the wife's: if ground for the smallest suspicion can be proved, she is condemned to death, and she either hangs herself in the presence of the family, or one of her own relations, her father or brother, acts as her executioner. Later on, the adulterer, or suspected adulterer, is searched for, and a favourable opportunity taken for hewing him to pieces with the sword.

In Scinde we are able to punish the murderers to a certain extent. Trial under ordinary law would be useless, as no one would give evidence. But a *jirgah*, or conclave of chiefs, presided over by a British officer, is held, which, like the original Saxon jurors, finds a verdict according to the chiefs' own knowledge of the case, and makes its recommendation, which may amount to a fine and the giving of a bride to the injured party. This sentence the British officer in Scinde may supplement by the imprisonment of the murderer for from one to even seven years. In Beloochistan proper, public opinion is not so far advanced, and Sir James Browne was compelled to leave murderers of this kind to be dealt with entirely by the tribal chiefs.

At Jacobabad, on the frontier of Upper Scinde, a great gathering takes place annually in the cold weather, the principal feature of which is a horse show. The Beloochee mares are famous, and Upper Scinde is one of the best breeding-grounds for young stock suitable for cavalry regiments. Consequently, to improve the breed, the Bombay Government long

ago introduced a supply of foreign sires, principally English thoroughbreds; annual prizes for the mares and the young stock are given, and races are held at which the Beloochee chiefs eagerly compete. Sir James Browne and his staff used to come down from Sibi to attend the meet, and took part in the Commissioner's durbar. Accompanying him were the great chiefs from the neighbouring hills, the Bhoogtees, the Murrees, the Jakranees, Dumbkees, Khosas, and others, some of them owning land in Scinde, and all of them with tribesmen and followers in that province.

The cordial relations between Sir James Browne and the Scinde authorities could not fail to strike them, more particularly when the Commissioner was welcomed by the Agent to the Governor-General at Sibi, at the annual gathering of the councils of elders, a few weeks later. At this meeting numerous matters were discussed and settled amicably between the Agent to the Governor-General and the Commissioner —which would formerly have involved a prolonged and perhaps an acrimonious correspondence—both sides being animated by the sole desire to do what might be best and fairest for all parties.

Sir Robert Sandeman had founded a charming hill station at Ziarat in the Suliman range not far from the Hurnai railway station, on the Hurnai Valley line, a peaceful sort of spot, such as a stranger could hardly believe existed within twenty-four hours of Jacobabad, where the thermometer goes up in the shade to 128 Fahr. in the hot weather, and sometimes remains for days at 100 Fahr. both day and night. It was very desirable that the officers of Upper Scinde should have settlement there, in which they might occasionally find refuge from the scorching heat of the plains. So Sir James Browne was

addressed, and he not only threw himself heartily into the scheme, but assigned a most excellent site for the purpose. He made his Engineers convey water to the site for the waterworks, and design and supervise the construction of the buildings.

Sir James Browne's personal qualities had much to do with his commanding influence. His sturdy physique and giant strength were alone sufficient to command respect among the tribes who are themselves remarkable for physical beauty and vigour. In spite of his quiet, gentle manner, the flash of his eye sufficed to indicate the great force of character behind, and all, whether English or native, who had business to transact with him would recognise at once that they were face to face with a ruler of men. Strong and unyielding in regard to the principles that he felt were right, or the measures which he knew to be required, no man knew better than he did that all projects that were desirable were not necessarily practicable, owing, it may be, to financial or political considerations; and then he wisely rested content with what was feasible, although, as he used to say, his energy in pressing his views did not always make him too popular with the powers that be. "In all the business which I had to transact with him personally,"—wrote a Scinde official—"none, I am bound to say, of first-class importance (and that fact alone is proof of the general tranquillity which prevailed on the Scinde border under his rule), I never found him unreasonable, never obstinate. On the contrary he always seemed to try to look at things from my point of view, just as I endeavoured to do from his, and make allowances for difficulties, such as the hard-and-fast laws of the British districts and the financial impotence of the Commissioner in

Scinde, and then to come to a fair and honest mutual settlement. It was a great relief to feel that on the border there was so strong and just a ruler who was anxious to help and determined to stand no nonsense either from petulant subordinates or from obstreperous chiefs. And as a personal friend and host none could be more hospitable and considerate."

In the preceding pages Browne's administration of his combined charge has been dealt with, and the several features and circumstances described. But apart from his actual proceedings, his work embraced not only the duties of Government, but the consideration of the controversies respecting the policy and the method for the control and the welfare of the province. He left voluminous papers on the subject, but their essential points only can be here dealt with, and these will now be shown.

It has to be borne in mind that the period of his rule was one of change and controversy, and that while his own views and policy were in disfavour and were set aside during the latter years of his own administration, they were adopted *in toto* a few years afterwards, and applied not only to Beloochistan, but to the whole of the transfrontier, which was entirely severed from the Punjab and constituted a separate province, on a thoroughly non-regulation system—the initial system adopted on the annexation of the Punjab, under which Sir Henry Lawrence ruled the province so wonderfully for two years—and precisely what Browne had so vehemently urged, from the very first.

Browne did not live to see this change, this reversion to the policy on which such districts were all originally started, but which it was the persistent aim of another school of rulers to subvert as speedily

as possible. It remained for Lord Curzon to reintroduce the non-regulation policy, and to insist on a recognition of the wholly different circumstances—under which, respectively, government by regulations is necessary in the one case, and paternal government in the other. It is almost impossible to describe correctly the result of the introduction of administration by courts and regulations into the country of such a primitive race as the Beloochees then were—the feeling of utter helplessness, of utter darkness, as it were—and afterwards the contrasting result of the reversion to non-regulation, to open-air justice, to patriarchal rule, when the people had the most complete, unswerving, childlike trust in the wisdom and paternal care of the rulers set over them.

The whole subject was one to which Browne gave the closest attention; of which the outcome may well be summarised at this stage, though incidentally a good many of its phases have been touched upon in previous chapters.

The point to note was the difference between the condition of affairs on the northern or Punjab frontier and that in the southern districts where Sandeman had been able to work with a free hand. Although the Punjab frontier had for some thirty years been governed by a succession of such grand officers as the Lawrences, Edwardes, Mackeson, John Nicholson, James, Cavagnari, and others, no British officer could venture to move about without an escort. Southwards, however, Sandeman's personal influence and methods had in a short time led to the removal of all alien and unpleasant feeling, to a full and natural intercourse between the people and the British resident among them, and to the cessation of feuds among the tribes.

In part, no doubt, this was due to the fact that the southern tribes were for the most part the more genial Beloochees, whereas the northern were prevailingly Pathan; and to the Beloochee clan system of obedience to chiefs or Tumandars, as distinguished from the democratic equality of the members of Pathan tribes. To this may be added the condition of the northern borders at the time when British dominion was substituted for that of the Sikhs, with the attendant development of religious fanaticism then and afterwards.

Browne used to dwell on the absence of any *bitter* feeling in the Beloochees, whatever the feuds or quarrels might be. They were always ready to fight, but also always ready to cease fighting if properly approached. They were always inclined to give a jocular turn to their quarrels—as in the case of the abduction by the Lagharee chief of Captain Grey, a deputy commissioner, with whom he was at issue. Sandeman had realised thoroughly how they could be best conciliated and managed. His methods and measures with the Murrees and Bhoogtees were like a play. The last of this class to be brought into the friendly fold were the Bozdors, with whom our relations had been steadily improving ever since 1871.

But besides these explanations, Browne laid stress on defects in the Punjab system and methods which made them ill adapted for controlling and conciliating the tribesmen. First of these was the unsatisfactory manner in which military expeditions were habitually carried through; being always followed by immediate withdrawal, without the establishment of any permanent position from which the tribesmen could be held in check. Thus within his

own personal experience was included an expedition against Kohat which ended in four days; whereas if it had lasted somewhat longer, so as to admit of the construction of works to command the end of the pass, the tribe would not have been able to worry and defy the British, as it did, for some forty years.

Secondly, there was the mischief of employing natives of the country, or members of the tribes, as middlemen between the British Government and the tribesmen. Instances where this custom has proved fatal are numerous, as in the case of Agror, the Eusufzais, the Khalil and Mohmand Arbabs, the Kohat Pass, Miranzai Valley, etc. On which head an extract may be quoted from a very able minute by H.E. Lord Lytton, Viceroy and Governor-General of India:

"Again, for the reasons given above, I think that the employment of Arbabs, or middlemen, should be discontinued as much as possible. I do not myself believe that it strengthens our hold even upon the small class we thus employ. For every man gratified by employment, a host of jealousies are raised against him and ourselves. There is some reason to fear that these personages are not altogether incapable of provoking or promoting difficulties on the frontier in the hope of increasing their own importance; and the police authorities at Peshawur have now ascertained that one of the Arbabs most trusted by the Punjab Government on that frontier was carrying on, a few months ago, a treasonable correspondence with persons in Cabul, which nothing but the man's death enabled us to detect. I admit, however, that there are many occasions on which the services of Arbabs have been, and may again be, most valuable to us, especially in opening communication with frontier tribes; but I think that, whenever their services can be dispensed with, and direct communications opened or maintained

by our own authorities, this should be done. Even if we could always depend upon the absolute loyalty of Arbabs, these men cannot convey to the native the same clear idea of our views and character that he would gain by personal intercourse with British officers." (Para. 63 of Minute by the Viceroy of India, dated April 22nd, 1877.)

Clear and prophetic words these; would that the Punjab had taken warning even when they were written, but it was deaf to all plain speaking. Again referring to Major James, Lord Lytton said:

"I have before me a minute by Major James, in which, as the result of thirteen years' frontier experience, he expresses himself most strongly as to the absolute impossibility of combining a proper intercourse with the Border tribes with the execution of his civil duties, and this Major James I hear spoken of from all quarters as one of the ablest and most active administrators the frontier has known."

Third, Browne noted:

"The failure of the Punjab system to win the tribesmen over, owing to our overworked European staff. No chance of the tribesmen getting any sympathy or being in touch with our officials; the centralisation of power in Lahore; and the fear of the district executive taking any responsibility. An officer once happily remarked that the Punjab is existing on the history made for it by a body of gallant officers who have long ago passed away from it. Very true; and just as Napoleon's presence in the ranks of the French army was supposed to be equal to 40,000 men, so the halo of these officers of the Punjab has cast a glamour on the destinies of the model province which it had no right to share in—and as history proves the province has no claim to be proud now of the position which it at one time held. Beloochistan, on the contrary, is living on what Sandeman and his officials have done for it in the

present generation, and we must wait and see what happens when he and his present officials have passed away from us, and whether the work they have done and the position they have secured is likely to be continued to their successors. Let us hope it will."

As special instances of the manner in which the officials of the Punjab were liable to overwork, Browne commented on:

1. The officialdom and heavy desk work introduced and the *high court* with its system and demands.

2. The especial overwork of the European staff—the work being gradually increased by an enormous accumulation of new functions, and returns, and duties; which all forced them to devote to desk work time which should have been spent in the district in personal contact with the villagers, peasantry, and native gentry.

3. The corresponding difficulty, on the part of the latter and of the tribesmen, in having access to their officers, getting into proper touch with them, or obtaining from them the sympathy which was the essence of the old success.

4. The centralisation of power at Lahore, and the fear and reluctance of the district executives to take personal responsibility without prior reference.

The requirements which Sandeman and Browne had so fully realised as essential, and had boldly carried out, were:

1. Personal control, with unwearied and unchecked accessibility.

2. The avoidance of undue laws and regulations.

3. The free and unchecked intercourse of the officials with the people.

4. The intercourse with the people being exhaustive

as to area from the borders of the district at all points to its capital.

Now that Browne was back in Quetta, and in a conspicuous position, it was certain that his apparently mysterious identification with the Mullah of Mukkur should grow and spread, and we may note some of its latest and most marked phases. While on his journey to assume the charge of the Agency, he was waiting at the Bostan junction of the Quetta Railway, and there addressed three Afghans on the platform, who were evidently in search of some one. They said they wanted to see the new Agent, and so he said he was General Browne. They recognised him at once with effusion as their friend the Mullah at Mukkur, though changed by the loss of the beard. The spokesman's name was Syud Allum, and he related that he was the son of another Mullah, named Jungoo, with whom he asserted Browne had lived for two years, and detailed his family history and present state, including the ladies of his family. Finally he promptly and laughingly quizzed Browne on the continuance of his old mistakes in grammar and pronunciation, as being unchanged from the days when they lived together! Browne asked him to relate fully the circumstances of those days, which he promised to do. Syud Allum then returned home, saying that possibly his mother would come back with him to Quetta to pay her respects to her old friend. Next September the Syud returned, without his mother, however, as being unfit for the journey, but with presents from her; and he then gave Browne the following narrative or statement which he had drawn up as promised.

"*Statement of Syud Allum, Tajik of Uchterkheyl, a village of Nourozi-Vihul, district Mukkur, province of Ghuznee; and of his two brothers.*

"QUETTA, *dated May 20th*, 1892.

"I am a Syud, and a Tajik *mullah* (priest) of Uchterkheyl; and my father, Mullah Jungoo, who was even then" (*i.e.* about sixteen or eighteen years before) "very old, was a man of much learning and piety, and had much influence in Mukkur. At that time Browne Sahib came to my father's house, and they made a great friendship. My father at first thought he was a Syud and a fakeer (religious mendicant), and was much pleased at his great Koran knowledge, which he said he had learned as a *Talib-i-ilm* (pupil) in the Bokhara Madrisa (College). Browne Sahib was then a fakeer, and my father met him in the *hujra* (guest-house), and they used to read prayers in turns together in the mosque, and do all the work (connected with) praying. After a short time Browne Sahib, having made my father swear on the Koran, told him that he was a *Feringee* (European), and had come from Peshawur through Cabul, but was become a Mussulman; that he would be returning to, and then be coming back from, Bokhara, after seeing the country, and would bring soldiers with him, and would establish a good government for Mahomedans. Was it not therefore advantageous to my father (to befriend him)? To my father this seemed befitting, and for two years Browne Sahib lived always in our house. Many friends and disciples came to him, and to his words; and it was arranged that many *mallicks* (chiefs) of the Ghilzyes and Tajiks, Tarukkis, Andars, Tokhis, Khotuks, Suleyman Kheyl, etc., would help when the time of fighting came.

"On many occasions my father used to be troubled because Browne Sahib played with dogs, and teased them as sahibs do, which is not befitting a *mullah*, as dogs are unclean; and a *tazi* (greyhound) was always with him, even at times of prayer. We used to eat bread (dine) in our house together for many days, and my mother used to kiss the coat of Browne Sahib, and touch his beard for the giving of the *nufs* (holy breath) and prayers. One day a woman called Zulika, who was a friend of my mother Gula,

and often was remaining in our house, laughed because the touching of a dog was not becoming to a priest; and then Zulika questioned my mother, and her own husband Agha, as to why this was. My father, having consulted with Browne Sahib, told Agha that in truth the *mullah* (priest) was a *Feringee* (European) to whom dogs are as friends, but was with his heart a Mussulman. Agha and Zulika were thereafter very friendly to my father and Browne Sahib, who showed them many *karamat* (miracles), and told them their thoughts when he breathed on them, and the odour of musk resulted from his prayers.

"Many other persons who are still alive, though many others are dead—Heera, Zahib, Mullah Mahommed Raza, Mullah Khan Suleymankheyl, Syud Ahmad of Mukkur, etc.—looked upon the Sahib as a *peer murshid* (spiritual teacher). Mahommed Aslum Tokhi, whom the Ameer Sher Ali had banished, and who came afterwards to Browne Sahib at Khelat-i-Ghilzie with many of his tribe from the Suleymankheyl country, as also Sado Khan, the old chief of the Khotuks, who was a world-seeing (*jehan dida*) man, and was also at Khelat when the Sahib came there afterwards, used to consult together. Much arrangement was made with them, and with other chiefs, and with Adam Khan, chief of the Tarukkis at Mukkur, for letting them know how to help Browne Sahib at time of need when there should be fighting, and when he should come back; and Sado Khan counted the Mullah Sahib to be a saint (*peer*), and so did many others. In those days there was enmity with the Ameer Sher Ali on the part of the Mukkur people, even as there is now with Ameer Abdul Rahman.

"After two years, owing to what the woman Zulika had said to her husband Agha about Browne Sahib playing with the dog, which is unbecoming, before praying, some of the *mullahs* (priests), having heard of this through the talking of women, made an excuse for enmity and quarrelled with the Sahib, and told some of the Ameer's officials. This was not through enmity of the woman Zulika or of Agha, but because of the talking of women about dogs becoming known, and also because of almsgiving (*zakat*) which

did not please the *mullahs*, as Browne Sahib got much for prayers, but, being a fakeer, gave it all away, and did many incantations for sickness, and rites, for no reward. When the Ameer's *hakim* (governor) of Ghuznee began to make inquiries, my father told Browne Sahib that there would be safety in not going to Bokhara through Cabul, but by way of the *haj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca, through the road of Candahar and Quetta. He used also to breathe the *nufs* and put his hands on sick persons for nothing, and work talismans and charms, both to drink and to carry on the arm (*bazuband*), and to tie on turbans. So the Sahib left my father's house by night and went to Quetta. When he left he wore a turban like what the Khost and Bunnoo *mullahs* wear, which a *mullah* from Khost had given him." (N.B.—These men wear peculiar reddish chocolate turbans.) "He used in these days, and when he left us, to wear a white, rough, sleeveless waistcoat with ribs" (meaning evidently a sort of Bedford cord texture), "and Caubuli shoes worn down at the heels and twisted. So my father gave him three rupees for shoes, and also the Kalam Ulla (Koran) from the mosque in a stitched and boiled" (probably meaning the process of softening leather by boiling for stamping and embossing) "leather case, for the hanging of the Koran round the neck.

"Afterwards my father got two Persian letters from the Sahib at Quetta, asking him to let him know in time of need. My father also heard by letters from Adam Khan Tarukki and other Ghilzies who went to Quetta, that the Sahib was at Quetta, and that he said the time was coming when they would need to help him. My father kept all these letters inside the stitched cover of a Koran during his lifetime. About six years ago (1886), however, and after his death, the Governor of Ghuznee, Khoja Mahommed Khan, attacked the men of Nawa and Mukkur, who were rebels. Our house was plundered, and the Koran fell into the Governor's hands along with the letters, which he sent to the Ameer (Abdul Rahman), who thereupon for a time confiscated my mother's property, but has since returned it to her, so that she is now well-to-do, and is not poor, and has some land.

"When Browne Sahib came back to Khelat-i-Ghilzie with an army after a year, he was dressed like a

Sahib, and he had many dealings with the Ghilzyes. My father and I used to hear much of his (probable) coming to Mukkur; but because of the Sahib's going back to Candahar, my father, being an old man and being weak, was not able to travel so far, although many persons told him that, owing to hospitality, the Sahib would have received him as he did the others, with friendship, and because he had been my father's guest. Then for some years after the war, many men who had known Browne Sahib at our house at Mukkur informed us of it, that he was making a railway; and that he used often to speak to them, although he was no more a *mullah* (priest), but was still acquainted with the Mussulman religion, and cut his moustache for fear of defilement, as ordered to Mussulmen.

"When, later on, my mother heard from travellers that Browne Sahib was becoming Lord of Beloochistan, she sent me and my two brothers for friendship—when we met you at Bostan, and did not recognise you, as your beard was not; but we know you now, as your *shukkul-o-jubba* (appearance and language) are not changed since you were in our father's home. Our mother Gula is much pleased, and has sent many respects, and (inquiries) if you can accept any articles of that country as a present. The woman Zulika is still alive, although her husband Agha is dead, and she also is sending respects."

Note by Sir James Browne

"The above represents in substance the account given by the sons of the reputed host at Mukkur. Most of the Sardars of Beloochistan and the present Khan were more or less acquainted with this story long before I heard it in detail. I was surprised, when at Jacobabad in January 1893, to hear substantially the same thing about myself from Sardar Harsham Khan, the cousin of the Ameer Abdul Rahman, and a guest of Mr. James the Commissioner in Sindh.' Apparently he fully believed it.

"As regards the *nufs*, or holy breathing, the laying on of hands, and the saintly odours, etc., with which I am so satisfactorily credited, much inquiry has

convinced me that hypnotism, or mesmerism cum trickery, is largely practised amongst the Afghans, and is a great source of power amongst the priesthood. The people, being entirely ignorant and very superstitious, lend themselves very readily to suggestion, and have unbounded powers of faith. In connection with this a certain very cynical and sceptical Persian *mirza* (scribe), who was at one time employed by the Indian Foreign Office to obtain information about the famous Akhoond of Swat, Abdul Ghaffur, and lived for a considerable time at his shrine, tells me a curious story. He says the Akhoond was a past-master in hypnotism and mesmerism, which were the backbone of his power, and that there were no limits to the delusions with which he would impress the ignorant tribesmen who visited him. The *mirza* informs me that the Akhoond used to rub the wooden walls of his house in places with camphor, musk, and suchlike spices, before an interview with a religious inquirer; and then by putting a cashmeeree brazier of hot coals within a hidden recess under the wall, he used to claim the odour gradually worked out of the wall by the heat as a manifestation of the *Ruh-ul-Khuddás* (the Holy Ghost)—the odour of sanctity due to his very potent prayer! The way for hypnotism, suggestion, etc., being thus generally paved, faith did the rest. Doppelganger may very well have indulged in similar pastimes. But, whoever he may have been, and whatever his motives, he certainly never bargained for a total stranger and much less for an unbelieving Englishman being so like unto himself, physically and mentally, as to unwittingly and without an effort reap the fruit of his pious deceptions."

CHAPTER XXII

THE CLOSE OF BROWNE'S CAREER: 1896

CLOSE OF MEMOIR—CLOSE OF CAREER AND DEATH.

THE last chapter brought this narrative to the end of Browne's active career. Its actual close was now at hand, and came very suddenly—as does sometimes occur, though very occasionally, with men of his robust health and constitution and magnificent frame. His work, both mental and physical, had always been exceptionally hard and ceaseless, and sometimes full of anxieties. Still it had not appeared to be telling on him. His friends, and the friends of India, had been looking forward to his further advancement to the highest posts; but he never really cared for the sort of bureaucratic employment that would probably be involved in this, and, as already described, he was preparing his plans and arrangements to retire from active official service in India, as the usual length of tenure of employment there was now approaching completion, and he had hopes of getting in England work which would have suited his tastes. But this was not to be. In June, 1896, an insidious and fatal complaint developed very suddenly—and his eldest son was summoned to Quetta. During four days he grew rapidly worse, till he succumbed on the early morning of June 13th. He was buried in the evening, with as a matter of course, the customary ceremonials which were thus described in the local Press:

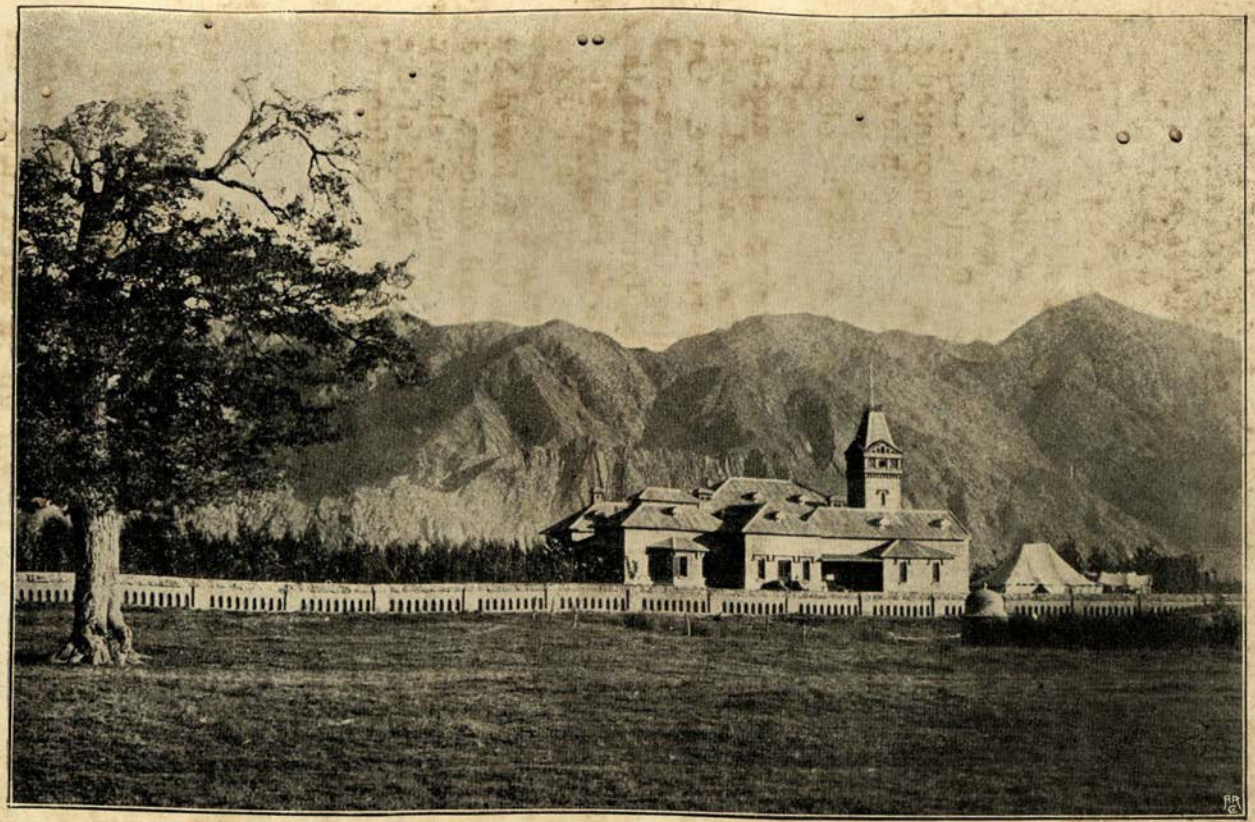
"The arrangements for the State funeral to which the late officer was entitled were at once put in hand by Captain W. M. Cubitt, First Assistant to the Agent to the Governor-General; and under the orders of the General Officer commanding the Quetta district, the station order was issued with a black border.

"In accordance with these orders the 2nd Battalion Border Regiment paraded at the Residency at 6.30 p.m., under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Brind, and formed the firing party. The following troops forming the escort also paraded at the Residency—viz. three squadrons of the 5th Bombay Cavalry (mounted); 16th Bombay Native Infantry. The remainder of the troops in garrison lined the road leading to the cemetery under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Collingwood.

"At 6.30 p.m. the coffin containing the mortal remains of the deceased officer was removed from the Residency and placed on the gun-carriage. On it was placed a cushion containing the orders and medals worn by the late Sir James Browne, and the whole was draped with the 'Viceroy's flag.' A very large number of handsome wreaths were laid upon the coffin and placed on the gun-carriage.

"The mournful procession, which was followed by a large number of military and civil officers, and by the members of the unofficial community, slowly wended its way to the cemetery, the bands of the Border and Lancashire Regiments playing funeral marches alternately. The roadsides were crowded by the natives, who viewed the solemn scene with much sad interest. While the procession was *en route*, a salute of thirteen minute guns was fired from the fort, where also the flag was flying at half mast. On arrival at the cemetery, the usual burial service was read by the Rev. F. E. D. Cobbold, M.A., chaplain, the hymn, 'Jesus lives; no longer now' (A. and M.) being sung at the close.

"As the body was committed to earth, No. 2 Mountain Battery, which was drawn up in action outside the cemetery, fired a final salute of thirteen guns. The troops then marched to quarters and the large concourse of people dispersed to their homes. The late Sir James Browne died at the comparatively



QUETTA RESIDENCY.

[*To face p.* 348.

early age of fifty-six, and the immediate cause of death was certified to be sudden hæmorrhage from the bowels."

In addition to the formal or official particulars of this ceremonial, some other features may be noted. The regard in which Browne was held by the natives was vividly shown by the spontaneous attendance of the whole population of Quetta and its neighbourhood, who thronged the roads to pay the last respects to the man whom they had so long known and honoured, and many of them loved—among them being many an old outlaw, now transformed into a staunch supporter of Government and of law and order.

The intelligence of his really sudden death was received with the greatest sorrow in varied sections of the community; and letters came from all quarters —from old friends of course, but also from every class of native, in bodies as well as individually. There was a collective telegram from "all the chiefs" of Beloochistan, and a special one from the Khan. The Press of India, native as well as English, and the Press of England, eulogised him heartily. The several associations to which he belonged, such as the Institute of Civil Engineers, honoured him in their proceedings. A letter had reached Browne from Lord Elgin, who had received the report of his illness, just before his death. When the later news arrived, the Viceroy sent a telegram couched in the following terms:

"I have heard with deep regret the news of Sir James Browne's death. Please convey to his son my personal sympathy with himself and his family, and my sense of the loss the Government of India has sustained on the death of an officer who has rendered it such long and distinguished service."

The *Gazette* of India issued this notification:

"The Governor-General in Council has heard with great regret of the death at Quetta on the 13th inst. of Major-General Sir James Browne, K.C.S.I., C.B., Royal Engineer, Governor-General's Agent in Beloochistan. Sir James Browne's active service in India extended over a period of more than thirty-six years, in the course of which he took part in the Mahsood-Wuzeeree expedition 1860, the Umbeyla 1863-64, the Afghan war 1878-79, the Egyptian expedition 1882. He discharged for two years with conspicuous energy and ability the duties of Engineer-in-chief of the Sind-Pesheen Railway, and he held, with distinction, from 1889 to 1892, the appointment of Quartermaster-General in India. Sir James Browne was specially selected in 1892 for the high post which he filled at his decease; and his death—so near the conclusion of his long and very distinguished career—is much deplored by the Government of India."

It may be interesting to note that the year (1896) of Browne's death was fatal to many of his comrades and friends. Among those who had served in the same campaigns were: Keyes, who had taken such an active part in both of Browne's earlier campaigns, the Mahsood Wuzeeree and the Umbeyla expeditions; and Sir Harry Lumsden, who had been one of the commanders in the former. Sir Charles Aitchison, who had served in the Punjab during many years of Browne's employment there, and other brother officers in the Punjab and Simla, died in the same year; and also that Sir O. Bright, who had been commanding troops in the passes of Northern Afghanistan when Browne was capturing Khelat-i-Ghilzie, besides meeting him on the Punjab frontier.

Browne had been instrumental in raising a memorial window to Sandeman in the Quetta church, in the erection of which both Sandeman and himself had worked zealously for many years; and now Browne's

friends placed a most beautiful mosaic reredos in his memory, below that window. The church, it may be remarked, is a very handsome structure, characterised by some as splendid. He had also taken the lead in furthering a permanent popular memorial, chiefly supported by the Beloochee community, in honour of Sandeman, in the shape of a *jirgah*, or people's hall, to be used for durbars and public meetings. The cost was almost entirely met by the chiefs and natives in or round Quetta. He used to watch the progress of this work almost daily, and it is said that his death was traceable, in a measure, to a fall which he met with while climbing about to examine the work.

Browne's friends in England placed a tablet to his memory in Rochester Cathedral. The following is a copy of the inscription transcribed for the family by the late Dean Hole:

In memory of

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR JAMES BROWNE, R.E., K.C.S.I., C.B.,
(late Bengal Engineers)

who died at Quetta, 13th of June, 1896, when
Agent to the Governor-General in Beloochistan.
Aged 56.
Distinguished alike as a brave Soldier,
a scientific and able Engineer, and an
accomplished Linguist, he was above
all one who ruled over men in the fear
of God and won the warm affection of
all who served under him whether European
or Asiatic.

"Looking unto the mercy of our Lord Jesus
Christ unto Eternal Life."—JUDE 21.

A memorial tablet has also been erected in the chapel of Cheltenham College.

As we have now described Browne's career in the sequence of its details, it may be useful to analyse it.

The fact of his education having been entirely Continental until his professional course began debarred him from much of what is customary to boys brought up in the British Isles. He was no sportsman; for though he had every inclination for it, he was throughout his career so hard worked that the usual opportunities for such amusements and recreation did not come in his way. His leaves and furloughs even were not used for rest or amusement, but almost entirely for study or travel for increasing his professional efficiency—engineering or linguistic.

During the whole of his career, until Lord Roberts became Commander-in-chief, the Engineers were nowhere as to the army staff—though the Mutiny campaign had been specially one of siege operation—and the prizes of the service had been reserved for the cavalry and staff corps. So that Browne, however widely known as an officer of exceptional practical capacity, was carefully kept to the beaten track, until Lord Lytton noticed his value, though he did not raise him to the prominence of those other *élites* who mostly proved failures.

As a soldier, he was forward, to a marked degree, in all his campaigns, and it has always been recognised that without his remarkable energy and physique, his dogged resolution, and his ability in surmounting all obstacles, the Hurnai Railway could not have been carried to completion within the time.

It has been generally charged against Browne that he did not do himself justice. He never sought anything: went wherever he was wanted, and let the usual prizes for men of capacity slip by him. The only occasion on which he publicly asserted his own

views in opposition to weighty authority was when he questioned Lord Lawrence's policy in regard to Candahar, and organised the public meeting in London to oppose it.

Most popular and influential with all classes and ranks of natives, he belonged to the old school that leant on personal influence and guidance rather than on rules and regulations—the school that saved India in 1857, and is mayhap saving it now. His eminent qualifications would have made him invaluable during and before the recent troubles in Africa. But it is only of very late years that Engineers, with the exception of Lord Napier, have overcome the older opposition, and men like Gordon, Kitchener, and Nicholson have had their value recognised.

Further, it may be noted that the period of Browne's service was emphatically that of the steady introduction of the *real* development of India, chequered only by the slip back following on Lord Ripon's well-meant measures when their harvest time had not yet come. Browne had seen the nakedness of the land immediately after the Mutiny; the quivering condition that followed till Lord Mayo took the reins and pressed forward the material development of the country; then the rapid advance in all matters except military organisation, followed by the feverish episodes of the Afghan war, and its sequel; after which his own position rose to greater heights, and would have been still more important and influential but for the official opposition he met with.

Such briefly were Browne's experiences of the changes that occurred in India during his career; and though from his own personality he performed such splendid work and rendered such exceptionally valuable service to the State, there can be no doubt

that he was equally well fitted for still more important positions, from which he was practically barred by the style and action of officialdom till then prevalent at Simla.

The various episodes of Browne's career, and his action throughout as described in the preceding pages, give the best evidence there could be to his personal qualities. Still it may be well to touch on them before closing.

It cannot be stated too clearly and emphatically that his leading characteristic, which, though not obtruded, consistently coloured all his actions and conduct, was a profound, almost childlike, trust in divine protection and guidance. More need not be said—the point is too sacred.

He was absolutely fearless, but never reckless; fully alive to dangers, but resolute to face them, and wise to meet them with the best chances of success. A thorough man, he was, as such, gentle and kindly to all that were weak. This was at the bottom of his success with natives; for while he treated them as men, he recognised the disadvantages under which they suffered from the barbarism of ages, and so behaved to them with a subtle touch of consideration, to which they were not, as a body, accustomed.

Full of *bonhomie* and geniality, passing in suitable circumstances into joviality, he was the warmest of friends and the most delightful of companions, and when so minded would be the life of any social gathering. He had made notes of many hundreds of stories of native humour, but these unluckily have disappeared. He had great powers of chaff, not only with his comrades, but with natives also—very effective because never sarcastic or ill-natured. During the days of profound illness all over the Hurnai route, he

aided greatly towards the recovery of the prostrate not only by actual assistance, but also by the cheeriness of his presence and his hearty speech and quaint phraseology.

He was essentially a free lance; a hater of needless trammels; too wise not to know that control and discipline are essential, but a rebel against unwarranted authority. No more trustworthy subordinate was ever met by sensible commanders-in-chief.

The gentleness which has been referred to extended to animals; and they reciprocated this liking. His ponies and dogs followed him about. It has been described how, in a difficult landing in the Red Sea, he led his mare along a narrow gangway ahead of the whole string of horses in the transports.

His chief social delight lay in music, as has been mentioned. He had not received any musical education, and his free-lance character affected him now and then, when he had to join in concerted music. In addition to his natural voice, which was a deep bass, and in which he could sing songs of the Pathans and roll out their calls, he could sing falsetto, and so imitate the shrill tones of Nautch girls and others, as on an occasion already mentioned.

With all this gaiety of heart, its depth was what attracted his most earnest friends, combined as this was with such keen intellect and sound judgment. The charm lay not only in the "jolly face," the "youthful spirit," but in the "leader of men," the "ruler of men," a man whom "all respect—all believe—all must love." Such were the words in which tributes to his memory were paid not from comrades only but from the most highly placed. Finally, how he was appreciated by his children may be understood from the following passage:

"A man to be trusted, loved, and obeyed; courteous and genial, and yet with a certain imperiousness of manner which allowed of no liberties. I was almost grown up before it struck me that father was a clever man—but I cannot remember a time when I did not feel and know that father was a good man. Full of life and brightness and cordiality, and yet underlying all, a gentleness, goodness, and sympathetic kind-heartedness that few could resist; and this came—I am sure that it came—from his religion.

"This religion, to put it quite simply, was 'Faith in God.' This was the lode-star of his life; it helped him in and through everything. I do not know if he always had this firm belief and trust in God, or if he learnt it step by step through his own experience of life—but I do know that his faith never left him. He could not do without it; it was a second nature to him, and so true was its nature that no one could live with him and not feel its influence.

"There was no parade of religion, only a daily consecration to God, a simple belief that 'what will come, and what shall come, must come well.'

"On the day the Hurnai line was finished, this one and only one entry is found in his diary for that date, 'Thank God.' Every work he undertook began with a prayer for help and strength and ended with a prayer of thanksgiving. He *knew* what he believed and had a most perfect faith in the God who orders all. Father often used to tell us that one of the 'greater' blessings was the free will which is given to each one of us, if we chose to exercise it. He used to liken a man's faith to the rope that passes through the catacombs in Rome. You may go through miles of darkness, but the rope is at the side, and it will lead you back to the light. 'As long,' he used to say, 'as you keep in touch with God, you cannot go far wrong.' You may make false steps, but you will come back again.

"Father's whole life carried out this belief, and his life of real goodness stands out apart from all other influences of our childhood. Worried and bothered he often was, and had to be—but it never came into his home life. I mean he never seemed put out or angry with us personally. I think I can honestly say I never saw father angry. It was not that he had

not got a temper, but that he had it so marvellously under control that we never saw it.

"Dear, loving, warm-hearted father, who always had time if love and sympathy were needed, but who was always too busy to scold or find fault—who seemed to know by instinct the sorrows that touched his children, but who never forgot the pleasures that made them glad. He watched and guided each one as they grew out of childhood, showing them with such patience how to overcome their 'besetting' sin—and trying with all the force of his love and example to show them the only way that leads to true happiness. And through everything the same keynote seemed to be, 'Have faith in God.'

"This on the one side—and on the other laughter, cheerfulness, with an endless fund of stories and adventures.

"Although father read a great deal in his spare moments (anything and everything, in fact, that he came across), I do not think he often quoted from books. His thoughts and ideas were all his own, full of originality, and drawn from his own experience and worked out in his own quaint way.

"He seemed to remember so clearly the lessons that each work had taught him. I suppose it was because whatever he undertook, work or play, he did it with all his 'might.' It was an all-absorbing work for the time being, and he used to say to himself that anything he had really worked out in this way he could not forget even if he would.

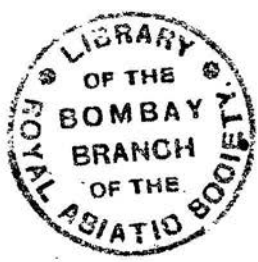
"He never forgot the music he had heard when a boy—chiefly operas and symphonies. He was very fond of music, though as a rule I do not think he cared much for modern ballads and drawing-room music. He was happiest when listening to Mendelssohn's 'Duetto' or 'Venetian Boat Song' played as he had heard it played years before, or to Mr. Mann's band playing one of Beethoven's symphonies. In these he would lose himself and be quite content. He loved singing and never seemed to forget either words or tune to any song he really cared for. At one time he wanted to study music more seriously, but his father would not hear of it, and afterwards he was really glad of this.

"I think he would have liked to take up medicine

as a profession, and he often used to say that he believed he had the spirit and love for doctoring in him that alone *can* make a good doctor. Certainly in any case of illness no one could be more patient, gentle, and untiring; and he seemed to understand what might be wanted in a most wonderful way.

"I must leave it to others to speak of that side of his nature which appealed to them. I mean his wonderful perseverance in carrying out his work, of his power of concentrating all his attention on the work he had in hand; of his strong will and determination when he thought a thing was right.

Such were some of the points of his character that gained for him the trust and confidence of all, superiors, comrades, and family, and that helped to bring him to the front.


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